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THE NORTH DEVON COAST

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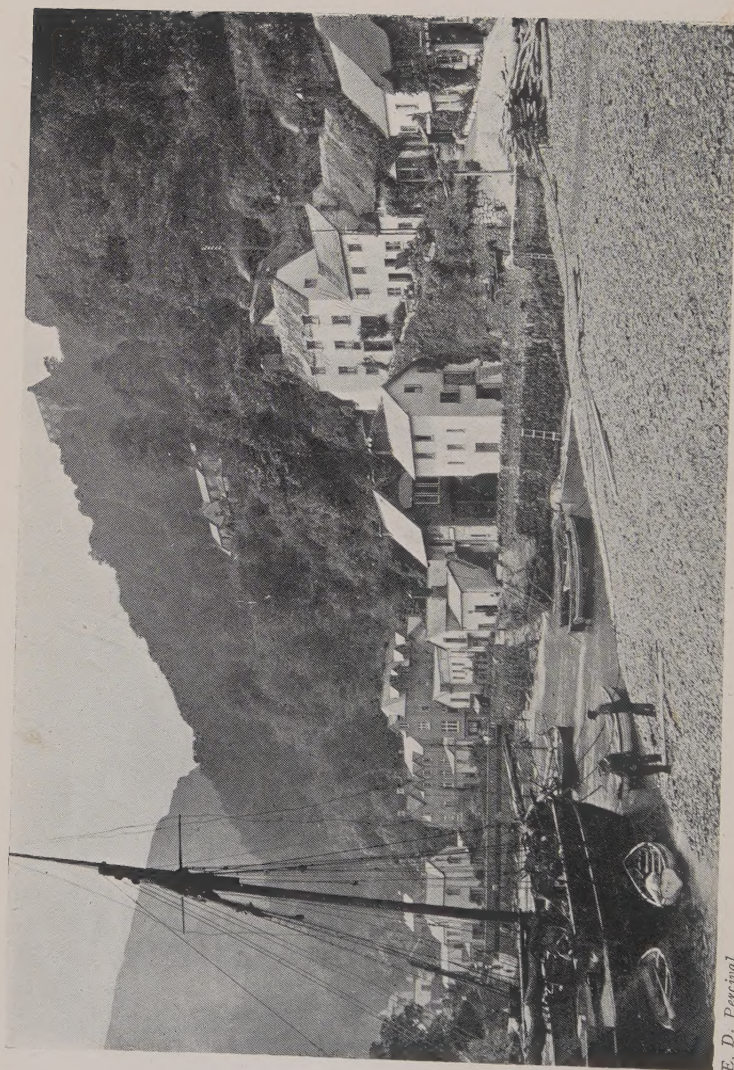
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LYNMOUTH, FROM THE BEACH.

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THE NORTH DEVON COAST

BY

CHARLES G. HARPER

“Let us, in *God's name*, adventure one voyage more, always with this caution, that you be pleased to tolerate my vulgar phrase, and to pardon me if, in keeping the plain highway, I use a plain low phrase; and in rough, rugged and barren places, rude, rustic, and homely terms.”—THOMAS WESTCOTE, 1620.



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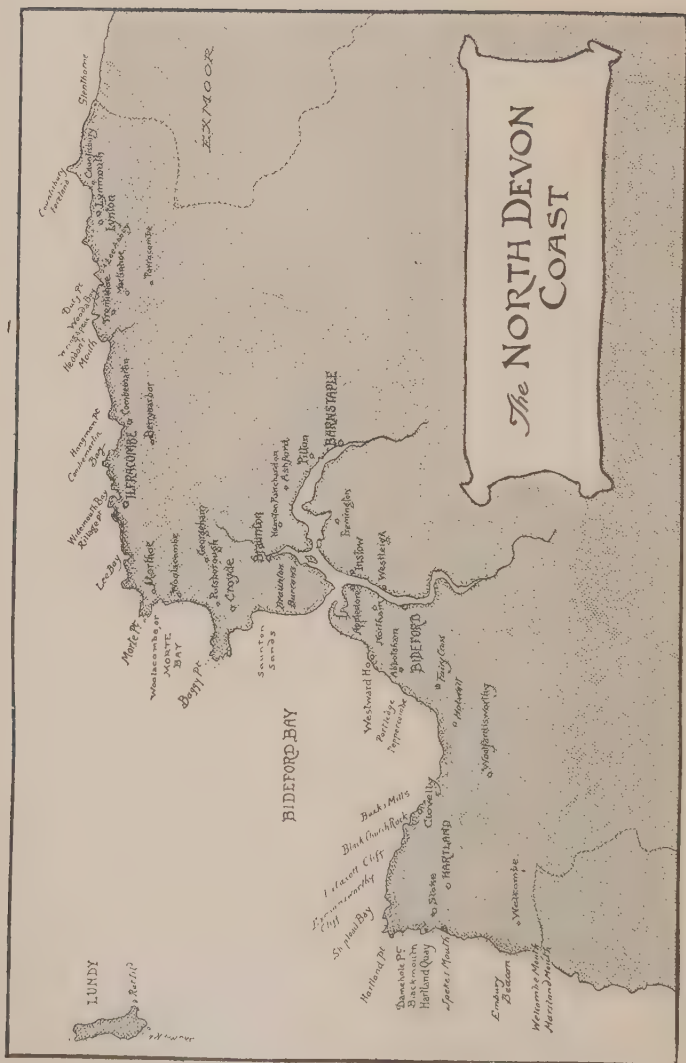
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The NORTH DEVON
COAST





THE NORTH DEVON COAST

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTORY

No one can, with advantage, explore the rugged coast of North Devon by progressing direct from the point where it begins and so continuing, without once harking back. The scenery is exceptionally bold and fine, and the tracing of the actual coast-line by consequence a matter of no little difficulty. Only the pedestrian can see this coast as a whole, and even he needs to be blessed with powers of endurance beyond the ordinary, if he would miss none of those rugged steeps, those rocky coves and "mouths" and leafy combes that for the most part make up the tale of the North Devon littoral. It is true that there are sands in places, but they are principally sands like those

yielding wastes of Braunton Burrows, whereon you even wish yourself back again upon the hazardous, stone-strewn hillsides sloping down to the sea that make such painful walking in the region of Heddon's Mouth ; and there you wish yourself on the sands again. It is so difficult as to be almost impossible, to have at once the boldest scenery and the easiest means of progression. At any rate, the two are found to be utterly incompatible on the North Devon coast, and it consequently behoves those who would thoroughly see this line of country to take their exploration in small doses. As for the cyclist, he can do no more upon his wheel than (so to speak) bore try-holes into the scenery, and merely sample it at those rare points where practicable roads and tracks approach the shore. The ideal method is a combined cycling and walking expedition ; establishing headquarters at convenient centres, becoming acquainted with the districts within easy reach of them, and then moving on to new.

The only possible or thinkable place where to begin this exploration of these seventy-eight miles is Lynmouth, situated six miles from Glenthorne, where the coast-line of Somerset is left behind. The one reasonable criticism of this plan is that, arrived at Lynmouth, you have the culmination of all the beauties of this beautiful district, and that every other place (except Clovelly) is apt to suffer by comparison.

Hardy explorers from the neighbourhood of London (of whom I count myself one) will find

their appreciation of this coast greatly enhanced by traversing the whole distance to it by cycle. You come by this means through a varied country ; from the level lands of Middlesex and Berkshire, through the chalk districts of Wilts ; and so, gradually entering the delightful West, to the steep hills and rugged rustic speech of Somerset. It is a better way than being conveyed by train, and being deposited at last—you do not quite know how—at Lynton station.

Of course, the ideal way to arrive at Lynmouth is by motor-car, and there, as you come down the salmon-coloured road from Minehead and Porlock, the garage of the Tors Hotel faces you, the very first outpost of the place, expectantly, with open doors. But, good roads, or indeed *any* kind of roads, only rarely approaching the coast of North Devon, it is merely at the coast-towns and villages, and not in a continual panorama, that the motorist will here come in touch with the sea.

To give a detailed exposition of the route by which I came, per cycle, to Lynmouth might be of interest, but it would no doubt be a little beside the mark in these pages. Only let the approach across Exmoor be described.

I come to Lynmouth in the proper spirit for such scenery : not hurriedly, but determined to take things luxuriously, for to see Lynmouth in a fleeting, dusty manner is to do oneself and the place alike an injustice. But the best of intentions are apt to be set at nought by circumstances, and circumstances make sport with all explorers.

Thus leaving Dulverton at noon of a blazing July day, and making for Exmoor, there is at once a long, long ascent above the valley of the infant Exe to be walked, at a time when but a few steps involve even the most lathy of tourists in perspiration. And then, at a fork of the roads in a lonely situation, where guidance is more than usually necessary, a hoary signpost, lichened with the weather of generations and totally illegible, mocks the stranger. It is, of course, inevitable in such a situation as this that, of the two roads, the one which looks the likeliest should be the wrong one ; and the likely road in this instance leads presently into a farmyard—and nowhere else. This is where you perspire most copiously, and think things unutterable. Then come the treeless, furze-covered and bracken-grown expanses of Winsford common and surrounding wide-spreading heaths, where the Exmoor breed of ponies roam at large ; and you think you are on Exmoor. To all intents, you are, but, technically, Exmoor is yet a long way ahead.

It is blazing hot in these parts in summer, and yet, if you be an explorer worthy the name, you must needs turn aside, left and right ; first to see Torr Steps, a long, primitive bridge of Celtic origin, crossing the river Barle, generally spoken of by the country-folk as “ Tarr ” steps, just as they would call a hornet a “ harnet,” as evidenced in the old rustic song beginning,

“ A harnet zet in a holler tree,
A proper spiteful twoad was he ” ;

for it must be recollected that, although on the way to the North Devon coast, and near it, we are yet in Zummerzset. Secondly, an invincible curiosity to see what the village of Exford is like takes you off to the right. Cycling, you descend that long steep hill in a flash, but on the way back, in the close heat, arrive at the conclusion that Exford was not worth the mile and a half walk uphill again.

And so to Simonsbath, a tiny village in the middle of the moor and in a deep hollow where the river Barle prattles by. Unlike the moor above and all around, Simonsbath is deeply wooded. Simon himself is a half-mythical personage, one Simund, or Sigismund, of Anglo-Saxon times, according to some accounts a species of Robin Hood outlaw, and to others the owner of the manor in those days. "Bath" does not necessarily indicate bathing, and in this case it merely means a pool.

The traveller coming to Simonsbath in July finds himself in an atmosphere of "Baa," and presently discovers hundreds of Earl Fortescue's sheep being sheared. Then rising out of Simonsbath by a weariful, sun-scorched road, come the rounded treeless hills and the heathery hollows, where Exe Head lies on the left hand, with Chapman Barrows and the source of the river Lyn near by, in a wilderness, where the purple hills look solemnly down upon bogs, prehistoric tumuli, and hut-circles. Here, in the words of Westcote, writing in 1620, "we will, with an easy pace,

ascend the mount of Hore-oke-ridge, not far from whence we shall find the spring of the rivulet Lynne." Hoar Oak Stone, on this ridge, is a prominent landmark.

Presently, at Brendon Two Gates (where there is but one gate), we pass out of Exmoor and Somerset and into Devon, at something under six miles from Lynmouth. Alongside the unfenced road across the wild common, as far as Brendon Rectory, the sheep lie in hundreds. Then suddenly the road drops down into the deep gorge of Farley Water, and comes, with many a twist, to Bridge Ball, a picturesque hamlet with a water-mill. One more little rise, and then the road descends all the way to Lynmouth, through the splendidly romantic scenery of the Lyn valley and Watersmeet, where the streams of East and West Lyn unite.

Circumstances have by this time made the traveller, who promised himself a luxurious and leisurely journey, a hot, dusty and wearied pilgrim. To such, the sudden change from miles of sun-burnt heights is irresistibly inviting. To sit beneath the shade of those overhanging alders, those graceful hazels, oaks, and silver birches, reclining on some mossy shelf of rock, and watch the Lyn awhile, foaming here in white cataracts over the boulders in its path, or smoothly gliding over the deep pools, whose tint is touched to a brown-sherry hue by the peat held in solution, is a delight. It is a delightful spot, to which the tall foxgloves, standing pink in the half-light under the



WATERSMEET.

mossy stems of the trees, lend a suggestion of fairyland.

The road winds away down the valley, its every turn revealing increasingly grand hillsides, clothed with dwarf woods, and here and there a grey crag : very like the Cheddar Gorge, with an unaccustomed mantle of greenery. Descending this fairest of introductions to the North Devon coast, past the confluence at Watersmeet, where slender trees incline their trunks together by the waterfall, like horses amiably nuzzling, one comes by degrees within the "region of influence"—as they phrase it in the world of international politics—of the holiday-maker at Lynmouth, who is commonly so lapped in luxury there, and rendered so indolent by the soft airs of Devon, that Watersmeet forms the utmost bounds to which he will penetrate in this direction, when on foot. And when those who undertake so much do at length arrive here, they want refreshment, which they appear to obtain down below the road, beside the stream, at a rustic cottage styling itself "Myrtleberry," claiming, according to a modest notice on the rustic stone wall bordering the road, to have supplied in one year 8,000 teas and 1,700 luncheons. There thus appears to be an opening for a philosophic discussion of "Scenery as an Influence upon Appetite." The place is so far below the road that, the observer is amused to see, tradesmen's supplies are carried to it in a box conveyed by aerial wires.

And so at length into Lynmouth, seated at the point where the rushing Lyn tumbles, slips, and

slides at last into the sea. One misses something in approaching the place, nor does one ever find it there. It is something that can readily be spared, being indeed nothing less than the usual squalid fringe that seems so inevitable an introduction to towns and villages, no matter how large or small. There are no introductory gasworks in the approaches to Lynmouth ; no dustbins, advertisement-boards, or flagrant, dirty domestic details that usually herald civilisation. The customary accumulated refuse is astonishingly absent : mysteriously etherialised and abolished ; but how is it done ? In what manner do the local authorities magic it away ? Do they pronounce some incantation, and then, with a mystic pass or two, abolish it ?

CHAPTER II

LYNMOUTH

LYNMOUTH would have pleased Dr. Johnson, who held the opinion that the most beautiful landscape was capable of improvement by the addition of a good inn in the foreground. We have grown in these days beyond mere inns, which are places the more luxurious persons admire from the outside, for their picturesque qualities—and pass on. Dr. Johnson's ideal has been transcended here, and hotels, in the foreground, in the middle distance, above, below, and on the sky-line, should serve to render it, from this standpoint, the most picturesque place in this country. One odd result of this complexion of affairs is that when a Lynmouth hotel proprietor issues booklets of tariffs, including photographic views of the place, he finds that all his choice pictures contain representations of other people's hotels. This is sorrow's crown of sorrow, the acme of agony, the *ne plus ultra* of disgust. Resting on the commanding terrace of the Tors Hotel, seated amidst its wooded grounds like some Highland shooting-box, I can see perhaps eight others ; and down in the village a house that is not either a hotel, an inn, or a boarding-house,

or that does not let apartments, is a shop. And I don't think there is a shop that does not sell picture-postcards ! There are some few very fine villas, situated in their own grounds, on the hill-sides, but whenever any one of these comes into the market, it also becomes a hotel.

And yet, with it all, there is a holy calm at Lynmouth. Save for the murmur of the Lyn, the breaking of the waves upon the pebbly shore, or the occasional bell of the crier, nothing disturbs the quiet. As there are no advertisement-boards, so also there are no town or other bands, minstrels, piano-organs, or public entertainers. Rows of automatic penny-in-the-slot machines are conspicuously not here. There is not a railway station. Nor is there anything in the likeness of a conventional sea-front. The Age of Advertisement is, in short, discouraged, and I am not sure that the ruling powers of the place have not something in the way of stripes and dungeon-cells awaiting would-be public entertainers.

But, lest it might be supposed that the advantages of Lynmouth end with these negative qualities, let something now be said of its own positive charms. It is daintiness itself, to begin with, and so small and neat, yet so rugged and unexpected, that it is sometimes difficult to believe in the *bona fides* of its picturesqueness, which looks almost as if it had been created to order. Yet the evidence of old prints proves, if proof were wanting, that Lynmouth—what there was then of it—was as romantic a hundred years ago as it is to-day.

Indeed, an inspection of old prints leads one to believe that, though there are more houses now, the enclosing hills are more abundantly and softly wooded than then. And, with the exception of the Rhenish tower built on the stone pier, everything has been added legitimately, without any idea of being picturesque.

That quaint tower, a deliberate copy of one on the Drachenfels, owes its being to General Rawdon, who resided here from about 1840, and, finding his æsthetic taste outraged by a naked iron water-tank erected on posts, built this pleasing feature to harmonise with the scenery. An iron basket, still remaining, was provided to serve for a beacon, and now that Lynmouth is lighted by an installation of electric glow-lamps, a light is shown from it every night.

But let us halt awhile to learn something of the rise of Lynmouth, as a seaside resort. At the close of the eighteenth century, the place was a little hamlet, dependent partly on a precarious fishing industry, and partly on the spinning of woollen yarn. But presently, fishing and spinning were at once and together in a bad way, and Mr. William Litson, the largest employer of the spinners, found himself and his people out of work. It chanced at this time that the new-born delight in picturesque scenery, that had already set the literary men of the age scribbling, had brought some few travellers even into the wilds of North Devon. They fell into raptures over Lynton and Lynmouth : raptures rather dashed by the dis-

covery that there was no sufficient accommodation for them. Litson, pondering upon these things, and with wits sharpened by threatened adversity, took opportunity by the hand, and in 1800, opening what is now the "Globe" inn as a hotel of sorts, and furnishing the cottages on either side for the reception of visitors, became the pioneer of what is now the great hotel-keeping interest of the two towns. Litson prospered in an amazing degree. Early among his patrons were Robert Coutts, famous in those days as a banker, and the Marchioness of Bute; and the stream of visitors grew so rapidly that by 1807 he was able to open the original "Valley of Rocks" hotel, up at Lynton. The adjoining "Castle" hotel soon followed.

About the time when Lynmouth and Lynton were thus first rising into favour, the poet Southey came this way, and wrote a description that has ever since been most abundantly quoted. But it is impossible not to quote it again, even though the comparison with places in Portugal is uncalled for, absurd, and entirely beside the mark.

Thus, Southey: "My walk to Ilfracombe led me through Lynmouth, the finest spot, except Cintra and Arrabida, which I have ever seen. Two rivers join at Lynmouth; each of these flows down a combe, rolling over huge stones, like a long waterfall. Immediately at their junction they enter the sea, and the rivers and the sea make but one uproar. Of these combes, the one is richly wooded, the other runs between two high, bare, stony hills, wooded at the base. From the

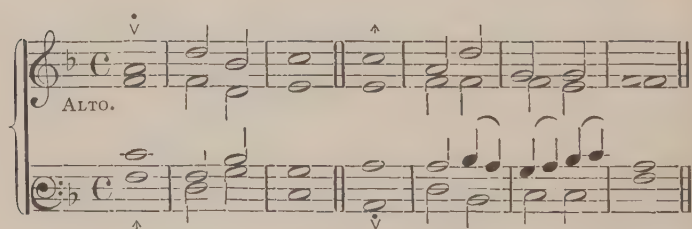
Summerhouse Hill between the two is a prospect most magnificent—on either hand combes and the river ; before, the beautiful little village, which, I am assured by one who is familiar with Switzerland, resembles a Swiss village."

And so with a host of others, to whom the hills "beetle," the rocks "frown savagely," the sea "roars like a devouring monster." And all the while, you know, they don't do anything of the kind. Instead, the hills slant away beautifully up skyward, the rocks, draped with ivy and moss and studded with ferns, look benignant, and the sea and the Lyn together still the senses with their combined drowsy murmur, as you sit looking alternately down upon the harbour or up at the wooded heights from that finest of vantage points, the "Tors" terrace, after dinner, when the lights in the village and those of the hillside villas twinkle in the twilight, like jewels. The poetry of the scene appeals to all, except perhaps Miss Marie Corelli, who, in the "Mighty Atom," does not appear to approve of it. This, of course, is very discouraging, but the inhabitants are endeavouring to bear up ; apparently with a considerable measure of success.

"How soothing the sound of rushing water," observed a charming young lady, impressed with the scene. I agreed, but could not help remarking that there were exceptions. "My dear young lady," said I, noticing the incredulous lift of her eyebrows, "you do not know the feelings of a householder whose water-pipes have burst in a

rapid thaw. Rushing water, as it pours out of the bath-room, down the front stairs, does not soothe *him*."

The voice of the Lyn has, however, suggested less prosaic thoughts, and has set many a minor poet, and many minimus poets, scribbling in the hotel "visitors'" books. Nay, no less a person than the Reverend William Henry Havergal, staying at the Lyndale Hotel, in September 1849, waking in the night and listening to that voice, harmonised it in the following chant which he inscribed in the book then kept at that establishment:—



It is a beautiful anthem-like fragment, "like the sound of a great 'Amen,'" and brings thoughts of cathedral choirs and deep-toned organs. Havergal, of course, as a writer of devotional music, had a mind by long use attuned to finding such a motive; but I am not sure that another composer, with a bent towards secular music of a sprightly, light-opera kind, might not, lying wakeful here, find a suggestion for his own art in these untutored sharps and trebles.

The Lyn in its final series of falls in the semi-

LYNMOUTH

private grounds of Glen Lyn, at the rear of the Lyndale Hotel, sounds a deeper note, and comes splashing down with a roar by fern-clad rocky walls and between a scatter of great boulders. A rustic bridge looks down upon the foaming water, flecked with sunlight coming in patches of gold through the overarching foliage.

No description of Lynmouth that has ever been penned gives even a remote idea of what the place is really like. I care nothing for Southey and his comparison with Cintra and Arrabida, for I have not been to those places, and don't want to go : resembling, I suspect, in that disability, and in the disinclination to remedy it, most other visitors, to whom that parallel has no meaning. Lynmouth is really comparable with no other place. It is essentially individual and like nothing but itself ; or, at any rate, like nothing else in nature. What it does really resemble is some romantic theatrical set scene, preferably in comic opera : the extraordinary picturesqueness of it seeming too impossible to be a part of real life. There is the quaint tower at the end of the tiny stone jetty, there are the bold, scrub-covered hills, with rocks jutting out from them, as they rarely do except in the imagination of a scene-painter, and here are the grouped little houses and cottages, mostly with the roses, the jessamine, and the clematis that are indispensable to rural cottages—on the stage. Even the very fishermen seem unreal. I don't believe—or at least find some difficulty in believing—that they, really and truly, are fisher-

men, and almost imagine they must be paid to lounge out from the wings on to the stage—I mean the sea-front—in order to give an air of verisimilitude. They ask you, occasionally, it is true, if you want a boat, but with the air of playing a part that does not particularly interest them, and every moment you expect them to break into song, after the manner of the chorus in comic-opera, expressive of the delights of a life on the ocean wave, and the joys of sea-fishing.

Or, to adopt the conventions of melodrama, as formerly practised at the Adelphi, and still at Drury Lane ; here you expect almost to see the villain smoking his inevitable villainous cigarette (an infallible stage symbol of viciousness), and, possibly in evening dress, that ultimate stage symbol of depravity, shooting his cuffs by the bridge that spans the Lyn ; and on summer evenings the lighted hotels down in the huddled little street look for all the world like stage-hotels—abodes of splendour and gilded vice, whence presently there should issue some splendid creature of infamy, to plot with another villain, already waiting in his trysting-place, the destruction of hero and heroine. But, lest I be misunderstood, I hasten to add that all these expectations are vain things, and that villains really require a much faster place than Lynmouth.

I have spoken already about the “ fishermen ” of Lynmouth, but, truth to tell, that is but a conventional term, for sea-fishing here is not the industry it is on most coasts, and the jerseyed

persons who loll about the harbour are more used to taking out and landing steamboat excursionists, or accompanying amateur fishermen with lines on pleasant days, than to enduring the rigours the trawler knows. Rock Whiting, Bass, and Grey Mullet give the chief sport in the sea, and in the Lyn are salmon, salmon-peel, and trout, as you



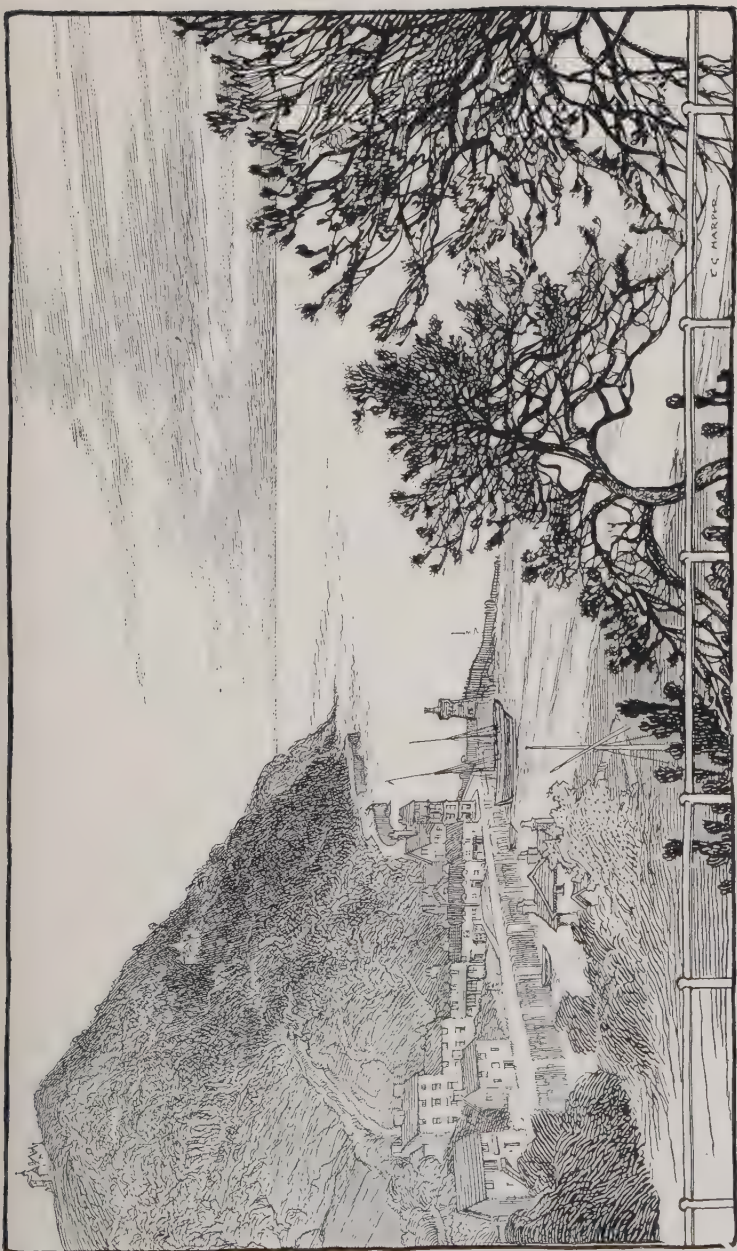
LYNDALE BRIDGE.

may readily believe by examining the trophies of sport with rod and line treasured by Mr. Cecil Bevan, of the Lyn Valley Hotel.

There was formerly, indeed, a herring fishery at Lynmouth. Westcote speaks of it as existing in the time of Queen Elizabeth. "God," says he, "hath plentifully stored with herrings, the king of fishes, which shunning their ancient places of repair in Ireland, come hither abundantly in shoals,

offering themselves, as I may say, to the fishers' nets, who soon resorted hither with divers merchants, and so for five or six years continued, to the great benefit and good of the country, until the parson vexed the poor fishermen for extraordinary unusual tithes, and then, as the inhabitants report, the fish suddenly clean left the coast." They were not friends of the Establishment. But after a while some returned, and from 1787 to 1797 there was such an extraordinary abundance that the greater part of the catch could not be disposed of, and vast quantities were put upon the land for manure. Then they totally deserted the channel for a number of years ; a fact at that time regarded by many as a Divine judgment for thus wasting the food sent. On Christmas Day 1811 a remarkable shoal appeared and choked the harbour, and in 1823 another shoal paid a visit ; but since then, the herrings have given Lynmouth a wide berth.

I have visited Lynmouth in haste and at leisure. To arrive hurriedly and dustily, and to make a quick survey, and so hasten off, is unsatisfactory. Under such circumstances you feel a pariah among a leisured community who are cool and not dusty ; and you do not assimilate the spirit of the place. The utmost satisfaction in the way of lazy enjoyment (it has been conceded by philosophers) is to watch other people at work. That is why, to some minds, Bank Holidays, when the entire population makes merry, are so unsatisfactory ; there is no toil to form the shadow in your bright picture of *dolce far niente*. Now there is a rustic gallery,



LYNMOUTH, FROM THE TORS HOTEL.

with a pavilion, where you can take tea and be consummately idle, built out from the sloping wooded grounds of the Tors Hotel, and thence you may, if so minded, spend the livelong day watching the people immediately below, in the central pool of Lynmouth's life. Overhanging the road, you watch the holiday folk who are taking it easy, and those others who are making such hard work of it, rushing from place to place. And I, even I, looking down upon perspiring dust-covered cyclists arriving, thank Providence that I am not such as them : conveniently forgetting for the while that I have been and shall be once more !

The " North " in North Devon raises ideas, if not of a cold climate, at least of bracing air ; but really, with the always up and always down of the scenery, the rather more bracing atmosphere than that of South Devon is forgotten, in the heated exertions of getting about.

Why do people so largely select torrid July and August for holidays ? For the most part it is a matter of convention, but in part because by the end of July the schools have broken up. There remain, however, large numbers of holiday-makers who are unaffected by school-terms and would resent being thought slaves to convention. They can go a-pleasuring when they please, yet they wait until the dog-days. Now Lynmouth, in particular, and the North Devon coast, in general, are exceptionally delightful in May and June. The early dews of morning, the cool, fragrant thymy airs, that in July and August are dispelled

long before midday and give place to brilliant sunshine and a great heat, which are in themselves enjoyable enough, but forbid much joy in considerable exercise, remain more or less throughout the day in those earlier months. September, too, when the fervency of summer mellows into an autumnal glow, has its own particular charm.

CHAPTER III

LYNTON—THE WICHEHALSE FAMILY, IN FICTION AND IN FACT

THERE is more difference between Lynmouth and Lynton than is found in the mere geographical fact that the one is situated over four hundred and twenty feet below the other ; a certain jealousy on the one side and a little-veiled contempt on the other exist. Lynmouth people do not speak in terms of affection of Lynton. "Suburban," they say, and certainly Lynton is overbuilt. Moreover, at Lynton, although it is on a height, you stew in the sun. It is cooler down below, at Lynmouth, rejoicing in the refreshing breezes blowing off the sea.

And there is no doubt that Lynmouth prides itself on being exclusive. As already shown, it does not cater for the crowd. Up at Lynton you are in the world and of the world, and find something of all sorts. Lynmouth's idea of Lynton is instructive. It is that of a place where the gnomes work, who labour for the convenience and enjoyment of the village down by the sea : only here you have the paradox that the underworld of these labouring sprites is above, and that the socially superior place is the, geographically, nether world.

It is only fair to remark that Lynton does by no means agree with these estimates of itself, and is indeed, a bright, clean, pretty little town, with its own individuality, and an amazing number of hotels, boarding-houses, and lodgings, the houses mostly built in excellent taste ; and I assure you I have seen no such thing as a gnome there. You do not, generally, on the North Devon coast, as so often in South Devon, find the scenery outraged by a terrible lack of taste, displayed in a plenitude of plaster.

When Mr. Louis Jennings passed this way, about 1890, the Cliff Railway, or lift, was newly opened, but the Lynton and Barnstaple Railway was not yet in being. Lynton, nevertheless, was in the throes of expansion, and he found "the hand of man doing its usual fatal work on one of the loveliest spots our country has to boast of. Flaring notices everywhere proclaim the fact that building sites are procurable through the usual channels ; this estate and the other has been 'laid out' ; the lady reduced in circumstances, and with spare rooms on her hands, watches you from behind the window-blinds ; red cards are stuck in windows denoting that anything and everything is to be sold or let. A long and grievous gash has been torn in the side of the beautiful hill opposite Lynmouth—a gash which must leave behind it a broad scar never to be healed.

" 'Who has done this ? ' I sorrowfully asked the waiter at the hotel.

“ ‘ *Tit-Bits*, sir.’ ”

“ ‘ Who ? ’ said I, thinking the waiter was out of his mind.

“ ‘ *Tit-Bits*,’ the man replied.

“ ‘ Well, then,’ said I, ‘ what has *Tit-Bits* done it for ? ’ ”

“ ‘ To make a lift, sir. Some people complain of the hill, and so this lift will shoot ’em up and down it, like it does at Scarborough. They say it will be a very good spec. You see, sir, he came along here and bought the land ; and I have heard say that *Rare-Bits* is coming too, and means to make a railroad.’ ”

However, as this horrified traveller was fain to acknowledge, even although these things had come to pass and though the once old-fashioned hotel had been changed into “ a huge, staring structure, assailing the eye at every turn ”—he meant the Valley of Rocks Hotel—“ it will take a long time to spoil Lynton utterly.”

Very much more has been done to Lynton since then, and building has gone on uninterruptedly. The narrow-gauge Lynton and Barnstaple Railway—the “ Toy Railway,” as it is often called, from its rather less than two-foot gauge—opened in 1898, has been a disappointing enterprise for its shareholders, but has brought much expansion. Probably it would have been a better speculation had its Lynton terminus been in the town, rather than hidden on the almost inaccessible heights of “ Mount Sinai,” another climb of about two hundred feet. The service is

so infrequent and the pace so slow that, coupled with the initial difficulty of finding it at all, the traveller can perform a good deal of his journey by road to any place along the route, before the train starts. And an energetic cyclist can, any day, make a very creditable race with it.

Lynton has now become no inconsiderable



LYNTON.

town, very bustling and cheerful in summer: its narrow street quite built in with the tall "Valley of Rocks Hotel" aforesaid, and a large number of shops and business premises not in the least rural. Between them, they contrive to make the old parish church look singularly out of place. That is just the irony of it! The interloping, hulking buildings themselves are alien from the

spirit of the neighbourhood, but they have contrived to impress most people the other way. "How odd," unthinking strangers exclaim, as they see a rustic church and grassy, tree-shaded churchyard amid the bricks and mortar; not pausing to consider that the church has been here hundreds of years, and few of the buildings around more than twenty. But there is little really ancient remaining of the church, for it was rebuilt, with the exception of the tower, in 1741, and has been added to and altered at different times since then. Quite recently it has again, to all intents, been rebuilt, and fitted and furnished most artistically, in the newer school of ecclesiastical decoration. Those who are sick at heart with the stereotyped patterns of the usual ecclesiastical furnisher, with his stock designs in lecterns and anæmic stained-glass saints, his encaustic tiles with an eternity of repetitive geometrical patterns, and indeed everything that is his, will welcome the something individual that here, and in some few other favoured places, may be found to redress the dreary monotony.

Everything within Lynton church has been smartened up and clean-swept; even the old wall-tablet in memory of Hugh Wichehalse has been gilded and tended until it glows like a modern antique, unlike the genuinely old relic it is. And since much of the ancient history of Lynton and its neighbourhood is inseparable from the story of the Wichehalse family, let that story be told here.

In the many old guide-books that treat of

Lynton, it is stated, with much show of circumstantial evidence, that the Wichehalses were of Dutch origin, and fled from Holland about 1567, to escape the persecution of the Protestants. We are even told how "Hughe de Wichehalse" was "head of a noble and opulent family," and learn how he had fought in the Low Countries against the persecuting Spaniards. Harrowing accounts are even given of his narrow escape, with wife and family, to England.

But the supremest effort is the legend, narrated in a score of guide-books, of Jennifrid Wichehalse and the false "Lord Auberley," who loved and who rode away, in the days of Charles the First. It is a tale, narrated with harrowing details, of a daughter's despair, of a tragic leap from the heights of "Duty Point" at Lee, and of a father's revenge upon the recreant lover at the Battle of Lansdowne; where, with his red right hand (you know the sort of thing), he struck down the forsworn lord in death. Follows then the sequel: how the father, a Royalist, was persecuted, and forced, with kith and kin, to put off in a boat from Lee. "The surf dashed high over the rocky shore, as a boat manned by ten persons, the faithful retainers of this branch of the house of de Wichehalse, pushed desperately into the raging waters. It was never more heard of."

But that is all fudge and nonsense. There was never a Jennifrid Wichehalse; still less, if that be possible, was there ever a Lord Auberley, and the Wichehalse family did not end in the way de-

scribed. All those things are doubtless creditable to the imagination of their compilers, but they do not redound either to their sincerity, or to the tepid interest taken in the neighbourhood by past generations of visitors. Any cock-and-a-bull story sufficed until recently, but now that local history is acknowledged to be not unworthy of research, it has been proved to demonstration by painstaking local antiquaries that the Wichehalses were not Dutch, but of an ancient Devon stock, and that they consequently could not have been the heroes of those hair's-breadth 'scapes ascribed to them.

But their own true story is sufficiently interesting. They are traced back to about 1300, to the hamlet of Wych, near Chudleigh, in South Devon, a hamlet itself deriving its name from a large wych-elm that grew there. From the hamlet the family drew their own name, spelled at various times and by many people in some twenty different ways; commonly, besides the generally-received style, "Wichelse," and "Wichalls."

It was in 1530 that the Wichehalses first came to North Devon; Nicholas, the third son of Nicholas Wichehalse, of Chudleigh, having settled at Barnstaple in that year. Like most younger sons in those days, even though they might be sons of considerable people, he went into trade, and became partner of one Robert Salisbury, wool merchant, and prospered. Robert Salisbury died, and Nicholas Wichehalse married his widow in 1551; prospered still more, became

Mayor of Barnstaple in 1561, and lived in considerable state in his house in what is now Cross (formerly Crock) Street. The great wealth he accumulated may best be judged by mentioning merely some of the manors he purchased: those of Watermouth, Fremington, Countisbury, and Lynton. To this eminently successful kinsman, the nine children of his brother John, who had died in 1558, were sent, as wards. His own family numbered but two, Joan and Nicholas, who came of age in 1588.

Nicholas, succeeding his father, retired from trade, and is described in local records as "gentleman," and appears incidentally in them as wounding another gentleman with a knife, in a quarrel. Something of a young blood, without a doubt, this young Nick. He never lived to be an old one, at any rate, dying in 1603, aged thirty-eight, leaving five sons and three daughters.

Large families appear to have been a rule not often broken among the Elizabethan Wichehalses. It was indeed in every way a spacious era, and one of the most continuously astonishing things to any one who travels greatly in England, and notices the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century monuments in the churches, is the inevitable repetition of family groups, with the reverend seniors facing one another, in prayer, above, and the Quakers' meeting of children below, boys on one side and girls on the other, gradually receding from grown-up men and women, down to babies in swaddling clothes. Early and

late the Elizabethans laboured to replenish the earth and people the waste places.

Hugh, the eldest son of Nicholas, the buck, or blood as I shall call him, was seventeen years of age when his father died. He also had nine children, and resided at the family mansion in Crock Street, until 1628, when that terrible scourge, the plague, frightened away for a time the trade of the town and such of the inhabitants as could by any means remove. It was a sorry time for Barnstaple, for the political and religious wrangles that were presently to break out in Civil War were already troubling it. For many reasons, therefore, Hugh Wichehalse, who appears to have been an amiable person, and above all, a lover of the quiet life, resolved to leave Barnstaple and reside at Lee, or Ley, in the old thatched manor-farm that then stood where Lee "Abbey" does now. Here he died twenty-five years later, as his monument in Lynton church duly informs us. The epitaph, characteristic of its period, is worth printing, not only as an example of filial piety, but as an instance of extravagant praise. From what we know of him, he certainly seems to have been the flower of his race; but, even so, he probably was not quite everything we are bidden believe.

HUGH WICHEHALSE OF LEY,
WHO DEPARTED THIS LIFE
Christide Eve, 1653,
æt. 66.

No, not in silence, least these stones below,
That hide such worth, should in spight vocal grow;

We'll rather sob it out, our grateful teares
 Congeal'd to Marble shall vy threnes with theirs.
 This weeping Marble then Drops this releife
 To draw fresh lines to fame, and Fame to grieve ;
 Whose name was Wichehalse—'twas a cedar's fall.
 For search this Urn of Learned dust, you'll find
 Treasures of Virtue and Piety enshrin'd,
 Rare Paterns of blest Peace and Amity,
 Models of grace, emblems of Charity,
 Rich Talents not in niggard napkin Layd,
 But Piously dispenced, justly payd,
 Chast Spousal Love t'his Consort ; to Children nine,
 Surviving th' other fowre his care did shine
 In Pious Education ; to Neighbours, friends,
 Love seal'd with Constancy, which knowes no end.
 Death would have stolne this Treasure, but in vaine
 It stung, but could not kill ; all wrought his gaine,
 His life was hid with Christ ; Death only made this story,
 Christ call'd him hence his Eve, to feast with Him in glory.

The play upon words, " 'twas a Cedar's fall," should be noticed above : it is by way of contrast to the " Wiche "—*i.e.*, wych-elm, in the Wichehalse name.

Four years before the death of Hugh Wichehalse, his eldest surviving son, John, had married one Elizabeth Venner. He distinguished himself as one of the most bitter and relentless among the Puritans of Barnstaple, and especially as a persecutor of the loyal clergy. He found it prudent in after years to retire to Lee, and endeavour to efface himself when the Royalists returned to power. Whether it was for love he married again, a woman of Royalist sympathies, after the death of his first wife, who had been as bitterly Puritan as himself, or whether it was policy, does not

appear ; but, at any rate, when he died in 1676, aged fifty-six, he left the family estates much shrunk. The enriched Wichehalse family was already on the decline.

His eldest son, John, was an ineffectual and extravagant person, with a bent, that almost amounted to perverse genius, to muddling away his property ; and a wife who in every respect aided and abetted him. After a while, they removed to Chard, in Somerset ; then, returning, he sold the manor of Countisbury, to pay his debts. He raised repeated mortgages on his other properties, borrowed right and left from his own relatives and his wife's ; and finally, at his death in London, after the foreclosure of mortgages and many actions at law, practically all his lands had been dispersed.

His misfortunes were largely caused, according to popular superstition at the time, by the part he took in the capture of Major Wade, one of the fugitives after the Battle of Sedgemoor, on July 6th, 1685. Wade and some companions had fled across country after the battle, and, coming to Ilfracombe, seized a vessel there, intending to make off by sea. But being forced ashore by ships cruising in the Channel, they were obliged to separate and skulk along the coast. At Farley farm, above Bridgeball and Lynmouth, Wade was so fortunate as to excite the compassion of the wife of a small farmer named How. She brought food to him, hidden among the rocks, and induced a farmer named Birch to hide him in his still more

secluded farm on the verge of Exmoor. Information leaked out that a fugitive was concealed in one of the few houses at Farley, and on the night of July 22nd, John Wichehalse, Mr. Powell, the parson of Brendon, Robert Parris, and John Babb, one of Wichehalse's men, searched the place. Three houses were entered unsuccessfully, but in the fourth—which happened to be Birch's—Major Wade was hiding behind the front door, as the search-party, armed, came in. Grace How admitted the party. Wade, who was disguised in Philip How's rough country farmer's clothes, ran off through the back door, with two other men, and John Babb, raising his gun, fired and hit him in the side. Wade was made prisoner. His wound was healed, and himself afterwards pardoned. It is a pleasing thing to record that he afterwards pensioned Grace How, who had succoured him in time of need.

The only tragedy of the affair was the suicide of Birch, who, afraid of his part, hanged himself some few days after the capture.

This affair deeply impressed the country-folk. Wichehalse was thought never after to have prospered, and it was told how John Babb was thenceforward a man accurst. He left his master's service and went into the herring-fishery; whereupon the herrings deserted Lynmouth. He died unhonoured, and his granddaughter, Ursula Babb, was afflicted with the evil eye. She married and had one son, who was drowned at sea; and thenceforward lived lonely at Lynmouth, half-

crazed ; telling old stories of the departed grandeur of the Wichehalses which grew more and more marvellous and confused with every repetition. It was she who told the Reverend Matthew Mundy the legends, which he took down and first printed—with many embellishments of his own—of Jennifrid's Leap.

There was never (let it be repeated) a Jennifrid Wichehalse. The feckless John Wichehalse, who ruined the family, had three sons and one daughter. The sons died without issue ; the last vestiges of the family wealth being dissipated in their time by the effectual means of a Chancery suit. Mary, the daughter, married at Caerleon one Henry Tompkins, and had one son, Chichester Tompkins. She returned, in a half-demented condition, to Lynmouth, and was used to wander along the cliffs, the scene of her ancestors' former prosperity, accompanied by one old retainer, Mary Ellis. At last Mary Tompkins fell over a steep rock into the sea, her body never being recovered ; and so ended the last Wichehalse. To-day, in spite of those large families of the various Wichehalse branches, you shall not find one of that name remaining in Devonshire.

To-day the Newnes' interest dominates Lyn-ton. I shall draw no satirical picture of what has been made possible by the Elementary Education Act of 1869 and *Tit-Bits*. Such an alliance carries a man into unexpected horizons, but with so many Richmonds now crowding the field, the thing will not be so easily repeated. On the crest of Holiday

Hill stands the residence of Sir George Newnes, Bart., and in the town the Town Hall he gave is a prominent object : picturesqueness itself, in its combined Gothic and Jacobean architectural styles, and contrasted masonry and magpie timber and plaster.

There is always, in the summer, a cheerful stir in Lynton, and the railway has by no means abolished the four-horsed coach that plies between Ilfracombe and this point, and even on to Minehead. But when the close of the season has come and the holiday world has gone home, what then ? The hotel-keepers and all the ministrants to the crowds of visitors must surely, to protect themselves from sheer ennui, institute a kind of desperate "general post," and go and stay with each other, on excessive terms, to keep their hands in, so to say.

CHAPTER IV

THE COAST, TO COUNTISBURY AND GLENTHORNE

THE six miles or so of the North Devon coast between Lynmouth and Glenthorne, where it joins Somerset, may best be explored from Lynton by taking the coast-line on the way out, and returning by the uninteresting, but at any rate not difficult, main road. The outward scramble is quite sufficiently arduous. The road sets out at first, artlessly enough, full in view of the sea. It rises from about the sea-level at Lynmouth, steeply up to a height of some four hundred feet at Countisbury, passing beneath a rawly red, new villa built on the naked hillside by a wealthy person whose hobby it is said to be to visit a fresh place almost every summer, to build a house, and then to move away. The name of the house I forget ; suffice it to say that the Lynmouth people, gazing with seared eyes upon it, know it as " The Blot." Below, on the left, is the strand known as " Sillery Sands," which sounds like champagne. Some style them " Silvery " sands, others even " celery " ; but they are not " silvery " ; and no celery, and still less any champagne, is to be found there.

At the summit of this steep road are the few

scattered cottages of Countisbury, or "Cunsbear," as the old writers have it. Few would suspect that the names of Countisbury and Canterbury have an origin nearly akin; yet it is so, "Kaint-ys-burig"—the "headland camp," being closely allied to the original Kaintware-burig, the "camp of the men of Kent." But to the writers of a generation ago, who wrote in a blissful age when there were no students of the science of place-names to call them to account, the name was set down as a contraction of "county's boundary." Distinctly good as this may possibly be as an effort of the imagination, it is not borne out by facts; for the county boundary did not exist at the time when the name came into being, county divisions having been settled at a much later date. Moreover, the boundary is a good three miles distant. Old Risdon, writing in 1630, is even more delightful. He takes what the scientific world styles the "line of least resistance," and gaily dismisses it with "probably the land of some Countess."

But there is not much of this Countisbury, about whose name there has been so much said. Just a bleached-looking, weather-beaten church, the "Blue Ball" inn, typical rural hostelry of these parts, and the school-house. For the life of me, I do not know which drone the loudest on a hot, drowsy summer afternoon; the bees or the school-children at their lessons—the bees, I believe. And that is all there is to Countisbury, you think. This, indeed, is the sum-total of the village, but

the parish itself ranges down to the Lyn, which forms the boundary, as the curious may duly discover, set forth on the keystone of the bridge that spans the stream, just outside the grounds of the Tors Hotel, which itself is, therefore, in the parish of Countisbury.

There is little within the old church, with the exception of some fine old characteristic West



THE "BLUE BALL."

Country bench-ends, one of them bearing, boldly carved, the heraldic swan of the Bohuns and the bezants of the Courtenays.

We here come to that great projection, Countisbury Foreland, past the school-house and by footpaths. A lighthouse, very new, very glaring, with white paint and whitewashed enclosure-walls, near the head of the point, sears the eye on brilliant sunshiny days. It was built so recently as 1899, and equipped with the latest things in scientific

apparatus. It casts a warning ray on clear nights, it moans weirdly in foggy weather, like the spirits of the damned ; and, in addition, it has machinery for exploding charges of gun-cotton at regular intervals. It is wound up once in four hours, and then proceeds to automatically produce thirteen explosions in the hour. So, in one way and another it will be allowed the shipping of the Bristol Channel is well looked after. From this point, the coast of South Wales is distinctly seen, or is supposed to be. Visitors to Lynmouth have no desire to see it, for the sight is a prelude to rainy weather. The Mumbles is twenty-three miles distant, and yet the hoarse bellowing (or mumbling, if you like it better) of the lighthouse siren there in thick weather is distinctly heard, like the voice of a cow calling her calf.

Like all approaches to modern lighthouses, the cart or carriage-road made to this at the Foreland is a stark, blinding affair of glaring rock and loose stones, very trying to wheels, hoofs, or feet ; and the hillsides are covered with an amazing litter of loose stones that have resided there ever since the very beginning of things. The place looks like Nature's rubbish-heap. The way to Glenthorne by the coast-path, therefore, looks more enticing. Something was wrong with the explosive-signal machinery, the day when this explorer chanced by ; something that refused to be speedily set right, and the lighthouse man who was attending to it was not averse from ceasing work to give directions and, incidentally,

to get a rest. So, quitting awhile his labours with refractory cogs, winches, and springs, he gave elaborate guidance by which one might keep the path along the rugged cliffs to Glenthorne. Not often does he find a stranger to hold converse with, and his directions were so long and full of parentheses that one quite forgot the beginning by the time the end was reached. But the burden of it was, "You go through those woods—they don't look like more'n bracken from here, but they're fair-sized trees, really—or else you can get to the road at the top."

"I'll take the woods," said I, having had enough of the glaring sunshine; "they'll be shady."

"Yes—and full of flies," returned the lighthouse man, "the place fairly 'ums with 'em."

How true that was: how entirely true! They are charming woods of scrub-oak, hanging on the side of the scrambly cliff; and one would fain rest there awhile in the shade, on a moss-covered rock, beside the springs that trickle down the side of the cliff. But the celebrated "hoss-stingurrs"—the large grey horse-flies—that inhabit the place in force, and bite you through the thickest stockings, forbid any idea of resting in that tormented spot, and the beautiful thoughts that might have found expression in scenery so provocative of literary celebration, are lost in the defensive operations that accompany an undignified retreat. It is in places a very clamberous path to Glenthorne, and at some points more than a little

difficult and dangerous. So few, evidently, and far between are those who come this way, that the track kept open by the occasional explorer who brushes aside the brambles and the branches that bar his path, is almost overgrown by the time the next stalwart forces a passage. Here and there a steep little gorge requires careful manœuvring ; in some places, where the track emerges upon the open, bracken-grown hillside, descending alarmingly, and without a break, to the sea far below, it traverses broken, rock-strewn slanting ground, where a slip would send the incautious hopelessly rolling into the water ; and at other places all signs of a track are lost. It is here, as the stranger goes chamoising up and down amid the tussocky bracken, that he feels sorry for himself. The excursion steamboats passing up and down Channel, half a mile out, command a fine uninterrupted view of these cliffs, and the adventurer, questing perspiringly up and down for any sign of a track, is fully aware that some fifty field-glasses are probably turned upon his efforts. He, therefore, unostentatiously drops down amid the bracken until those steamboats pass out of sight, beyond the Foreland.

One of the cruellest dilemmas is that which Fate is capable of presenting the stranger in these perilous ways. He slips on a mossy ledge under the shadow of lichened branches, and, to save himself, grips in the half-light what he thinks to be a foxglove, but is really a thistle. " Hold fast to that which is good," say the Scriptures ; and

although in other circumstances a thistle is scarcely a desirable grip, yet, between the prospect of rolling down some hundreds of feet and the certainty even of excoriated hands, there is but one possible choice.

In the middle of July, when the bracken is come to full growth, the air is filled with the exquisite odour of it ; a peculiar scent, heavy and sweet, like that of a huge making of strawberry jam. And presently, after much toil, you come to a broad green ride, where you may rest awhile and luxuriously inhale that fragrance.

Point Desolation is the name given to one of the headlands on the way, and "Rodney" the name of a cottage, now deserted, in a dark cleft, overhung with trees. Finally, the green drive conducts to a very welcome granite seat overlooking a wide expanse of sea, and thence through a gateway marked "private." This is the entrance to the Glenthorne grounds, which are not so strictly private as the stranger might suppose. Through the gateway, the path continues, bordered here with laurels and fir-trees, and so dips down toward the mansion, built in 1830, in the domestic Gothic style, on a partly natural terrace, three parts of the way down the wooded cliffs and hill-sides that go soaring up to a height of five hundred feet. The house is situated exactly on the borderline of Devon and Somerset, and is in the loneliest situation imaginable ; having, indeed, been in the old days a favourite spot with the smugglers of these coasts. It was built, and the grounds

enclosed, by the Reverend W. S. Halliday, a person whose eccentricities may yet be heard of at Lynmouth. One of his peculiar amusements was the sardonic fancy for burying genuine Roman coins in places where it is thought no Romans ever penetrated, with the expressed idea of puzzling future antiquaries. It seems—since he cannot



GLENTHORNE.

be there to chuckle over the jest—a strange kind of humour.

The long ascent from Glenthorne, through the woods, is extraordinarily tiring, beautiful though those woods be, and aromatic with piny odours. The carriage-drive, zigzagging up, is steep, and a halt by the way, every now and then, more grateful and comforting than even a famous cocoa is advertised to be. But that ascent in the shade

is a mere nothing to the further treeless ascent to the coach-road, under the July sun. Bare grassy combes, and white roads that wind round the mighty shoulders of the hills exhaust the wayfarer, who at last, taking on trust the prehistoric camp of Old Barrow, perched on a steep height, gains the dull highway with a sigh of relief. I daresay a good many of the sardonic Mr. Halliday's Roman coins are buried in Old Barrow, awaiting antiquarian discovery.

The way back to Lynmouth, crossing Countisbury Common, has some beautiful glimpses away on the left, over the wooded valley of the East Lyn.

CHAPTER V

THE NORTH WALK—THE VALLEY OF ROCKS—LEE
“ ABBEY ”—WOODA BAY—HEDDON’S MOUTH
—TRENTISHOE—THE HANGMAN HILLS

AND so at last to leave Lynmouth.

It is by no means necessary to take Lynton on the way to the Valley of Rocks and the coast-walk to Wooda Bay and Heddon’s Mouth. The cliff-path known as the North Walk avoids Lynton, and, climbing up midway along the hillside, forms a secluded route of the greatest beauty. It was cut in 1817 by a public-spirited Mr. Sanford. Until that time, there was no path, and only the most hardy climbers, at the risk of falling headlong into the sea, ever attempted to make their way by this route. It is merely a footpath, and so not in any way injurious to the wild, romantic nature of the scenery. Were some injudicious person, or local authority, to conceive the idea of forming it into a broad road, not Nature herself could, short of a convulsion, remedy the scar that would be made for all the neighbourhood to see. Trees cannot grow on this stony hillside, to hide such things ; the great gash made for the Lift, or Cliff Railway, which here runs at right-angles up hill, being only by good fortune screened

through ascending by a route affording foothold for shrubs and undergrowth. It is now, indeed, hidden in a degree those who saw the raw wound in 1890 dared not hope for. Kindly Nature, dear, forgiving, long-suffering, immortal mother, to whom we all come, weary, for rest at last, to your ample bosom, how great soever be our enormities, you bear with them all and, smiling, resume your way.

This rocky walk, winding past one grey crag after another, is rich in towered and spired masses and jutting pinnacles. Sometimes they rise up for all the world like pedestals rudely shaped to receive statues; but they would need to be statues of heroic size and pose to fit these surroundings. The eye ranges along the coast, past Castle Rock and Duty Point, to the softly rounded masses of woods covering the hillsides enclosing Wooda Bay; and only the restless, resistless spirit of exploration forbids long lingering here and there, on those occasional seats provided by the thoughtful Urban District Council that rules the twin places, Lynmouth and Lynton, and perseveringly tries to reconcile their jealousies. But one must needs rest awhile at that point where the North Walk, bending to the left, enters the Valley of Rocks. Here a convenient seat is placed, commanding a view backwards to Lynmouth and the Foreland, and looking down from a sheer height on to great emptinesses of blue, sunlit sea. Seagulls wheel and cry, or poise suddenly, on idle extended pinions, whimsically like a cyclist

“free-wheeling” ; excursion steamers, to and from Ilfracombe and other resorts, go by, and in the still August sea leave more than mile-long creamy wakes of foam traced in the blue, until they become indistinct in distance.

An elderly gentleman, who had hobbled up the path on gouty feet, sat down beside me. Like two true Britons, we sat there a minute or two together, each ignoring the presence of the other. He glanced a greatly impressed eye upon the short, steep and slippery slope of grass that alone intervened between his side of the seat and a sheer drop of some two hundred feet into the sea. “It would not be difficult to commit suicide here,” he at length remarked.

Was he wearied to extinction with his gout, and so determined here and now, to make an end? Not at all : it was a purely speculative thought.

“The easiest thing in the world,” I replied ; “and one person might readily push another over, and no one——”

“Yes, yes,” he rejoined with alacrity, and relapsed into thoughtful silence a moment. Then, suddenly consulting his watch : “Time I was moving off for lunch.”

Now I don’t by any means, you know, regard myself as a very desperate-looking person, yet obviously that unlucky remark moved that nervous old gentleman to go off in quest of his lunch at a very early hour. I suppose he imagined himself to have experienced a very narrow escape. “One



THE VALLEY OF ROCKS.

does read such dreadful things in the papers," I hear him, in imagination, saying at lunch ; " you never know what lunatic you may meet in some lonely spot." True.

And so, into the Valley of Rocks. There was a time when every writer who happened upon the Valley of Rocks felt himself obliged to adopt an attitude of awe, and to ransack the dictionary for adjectives to fitly represent the complicated state of mind into which he generally lashed himself. That time has naturally been succeeded by a revulsion of feeling ; and there is not a guide-book at the present day which does not apologise for those old transports of feeling, and declare the Valley of Rocks to be really nothing remarkable. But that later attitude is just as absurd as the earlier. The valley is very fine indeed, and its wildness is only impaired by the broad white ribbon of road that runs through it, and will not let you forget that here, too, however craggy and precipitous the piled-up masses of granite on either side, and however remote the feeling, actually the most up-to-date civilisation is very near indeed.

This is what was written of the Valley of Rocks in 1803 : " The heights on each side are of a mountainous magnitude, but composed, to all appearances, of loose, unequal masses, which form here and there rude natural columns, and are fantastically arranged along the summits, so as to resemble extensive ruins impending over the pass."

So far, this is literally true, and the name of Castle Rock, given to one of these stony heights, grimly coroneted with masses of rock, is excellently descriptive. The rocks so closely resemble towers and battlements that the stranger is often deceived into thinking them to be real masonry. A companion rocky hill, isolated midway in the valley, and called "Ragged Jack," from its notched outline, is almost equally castellated.

It is only when the account already quoted proceeds to dilate upon the "awful vestiges of convulsion and desolation presenting themselves, and inspiring the most sublime ideas," that we do not quite follow, and we suspect this was the outcome of much competitive writing; each succeeding writer striving to pile phrase upon phrase, very much after the manner in which the rocks of the Valley of Rocks are heaped upon one another.

The "Devil's Cheese-wring" is the name of one of these curious stony piles, now partly overgrown with ivy. The Valley and the cheese-wring are mentioned in "Lorna Doone," a romance no one can escape in North Devon, strive though he may; although, really, the Doone Valley and almost every incident of that story, are in, and concerned with, Somerset.

A wind-swept little wood is almost the only sign of vegetation, except the coarse grass, in this wild valley of grey stones; but it is the appalling heat, rather than the wind, which troubles the tourist in his passage, and he is often fain to

shelter awhile in the welcome shade of some huge crag ; thinking, as he does so, of that eloquent passage in Isaiah, " The shadow of a great rock in a weary land." And really, the Valley of Rocks is very like the parched, stony land of Palestine, which suggested the phrase.

It is at the close of some sultry summer day that the Valley of Rocks looks its very best. The irradiated sky, throwing into silhouette the great masses of rock, has the effect of magnifying and glorifying them. On such summer evenings, the more youthful among the holiday-makers set out from Lynton, and there, on the rugged hillside of the Castle Rock or Ragged Jack, you may see the white frocks of the girls, looking more than a little like the white-robed figures of those Druids, who, according to old Polwhele, used this place of desolation as a temple, and carved the roughly shaped rock-pillars and granite hollows into " rock idols " and " sacrificial basins." On the summit of Castle Rock a " white lady " of a different kind may be seen ; a curious figure, resembling a woman, formed by a huge slab of rock fallen between two upright masses. The resemblance is sufficiently close to startle strangers coming this way at night.

The road goes under the rugged hills, past the little inlet of Wringcliff Bay, overhung with ferny precipices, to a gate leading into the domain of Lee Abbey. All kinds of wheeled traffic may go through by lodge and gate, except motor vehicles—they are forbidden.

Lee Abbey, occupying the site of the old manor-house of the Wichehalse family, is an abbey only in name and venerable only in appearance, having been built in 1850. But although "Abbey" be merely a fanciful name, and although there yet remain people who have seen the building of the entire range of mansion and outworks, the ivied entrance-tower and enclosing walls have so truly mediæval an appearance, that many people are entirely deceived, and, not seeking to inform themselves, dream wonderfully romantic dreams of "the old monks" and their religious life in this secluded spot, and live ever afterwards in happy ignorance of the deception. Lee "Abbey" is, in fact, nothing more than a very charming country residence, designed to fit an exceptionally beautiful site.

High above it is the woody hill with look-out tower overhanging that spot on Duty Point called "Jennifrid's Leap," of which we have already heard, and down below is the loveliest little bay—Lee Bay—with Wooda Bay opening out beyond it, and the little tumbled headland of Crock Point and the swelling, scrub-covered hillside of Bonhill Top in between. To style the little promontory Crock Point is entirely correct, for it was the scene of a landslip somewhere about 1796, when, one Sunday morning, the hillside fields, with their standing crops of wheat, suddenly slid down to the sea in utter ruin. This was due partly to the percolation of landsprings acting upon the clay, and the clay-digging that had for some while been



LEE "ABBEY."

MANSEA
CENTRA

in progress, for shipment to Holland. The names, "Crock Point" and "Crock Meads," probably allude to this old digging for pottery uses.

Lee Bay looks like the choicest site in some delectable Land of Heart's Desire. Down goes the road, through another gate and past the most entirely picturesque and well-constructed lodge I have ever seen, and so out of this private domain. Here a shady valley welcomes the heated traveller ; a valley where everything but the generous trees, and the cool shade they spread, is in miniature. A little stream comes running swiftly down from the hilltops, as though it, too, were eager to enter from sunburnt heights into this place, where mossy tree-trunks radiate a welcome coolness, and hart's-tongue ferns grow in lichened walls and look refreshing. The little stream presently falls over a ledge of rock and becomes a little waterfall, whose purring voice fills the narrow space ; and everything is delightful. And there are not any of those horse-stingers, which generally infest the most desirable spots and, instead of confining themselves strictly to horse-stinging, interfere with inoffensive explorers.

The tiny bay that opens out from this twilight lane is a quiet spot, where boulders are scattered about amid the sand and shingle, with that look of studied abandon customary in stage-carpenters' versions of the seaside ; and surely we can give no higher praise than that ! It is a spot where one might fitly converse with some not too forward young mermaid (keep your eye off her tail, and

such, by all accounts, should be presentable enough); to be auditor of strange, uncanny legends; a thousand fearful wrecks "full fathom five," and dead-men's bones and drowned treasure.

But for tales of drowned treasure, or "money sunk" and lost, which, after all, is much the same to the owner of it—one need not go far, nor seek the dangerous society of mermaids. Wooda Bay, yonder, across the intervening neck of land, has a modern story of some interest. It was somewhere about 1895 that Benjamin Greene Lake, of the London firm of solicitors, Lake and Lake, conceived the idea of "developing" this secluded and extremely lovely spot, and of making it, as it were, a newer Lynmouth. He purchased much land, caused many roads to be made to the bay, and built an elaborate timber landing-stage for steamers. A few houses were indeed built here and there: among them the "Glen" Hotel, but Wooda Bay has not developed to any extent, in the building-estate sense. How many thousands of pounds were lost here, seems uncertain; according to some accounts, £25,000, or by others, much more. Unfortunately, this was one of Benjamin Greene Lake's many speculations financed with other people's money—without their knowledge or consent. He was sentenced in January 1901 to twelve years' imprisonment, for converting trust funds to his own use. He had in various projects made away with no less than £170,000 of his clients' money.

So there was an end of this great development

idea. Only a few scattered houses and the roads gashed in the hill-tops remain to tell of it, for the sea speedily washed away every fragment of the timber pier.

The name of Wooda Bay, therefore, falls ill on the ears of not a few defrauded persons. It is a pity, for it is one of the loveliest bays on an exceptionally lovely coast. The Post Office authorities have adopted the new-fangled spelling, "Woody," instead of "Wooda," as appears by the tree-shaded post-office here; and the Lynton and Barnstaple Railway, which has a station for it, set down in a far-off wilderness, appears to spell the name, with a fine air of impartiality, in both styles. But the old rustic Devonian way was "Wooda"; a form characteristic of innumerable place-names throughout the country, and exemplified near by, in "Parracombe," "Challacombe," "Fullaford," "Buzzacott," and innumerable others.

Delightful lanes lead round the shores of the bay, amid woods, with here and there a waterfall; notably at a point where a bridge carrying a lane over a little stream is inscribed Inkerman Bridge, 1857.

Near the shore is the unpretending manor house of Martinhoe: the church of that parish being situated high above, away among the wild commons of a little-visited *hinterland*. It was here and at Trentishoe, many years since, that the future Bishop Hannington, who met a martyr's fate in 1885 in the wilds of his African diocese, was

curate. He dressed the part unconventionally, in a manner fitting a neighbourhood where there were no Dorcas Societies, mothers' meetings, or any of the quaint machinery of a modern parish. Only rough farmers and their men, and wild and unfrequented footpaths formed everyday experiences. The typical curate would have soon found his conventional dress very much out of place. Hannington wore Bedford cord knee-breeches of a yellow hue, yellow Sussex gaiters with brass buttons, and great nailed boots that would have suited a ploughboy. A short jerkin of black cloth and a clerical waistcoat that buttoned up the side gave just a professional hint. In this costume, covered with the surplice, of course, he would take the services as well; not from any eccentricity, but simply because the conditions of these rustic parishes demanded it. They demanded much walking, too. "I see you've got fine legs," Dr. Temple, the rather grim Bishop of Exeter, said: "mind you run about your parish."

Over the wooded hill called Wringapeak, the way now lies on to Heddon's Mouth.

There is no hint of monotony in this grand stretch of coast scenery. Here nature is full of resources and surprises, and each cliff-profile, valley, wooded hillside, or little bay is strikingly different from the last. Leaving Wooda Bay behind, having already, as you think, tasted every variety of scenic splendour, yet another aspect of these boundless resources is revealed, in an



WOODA BAY.

exquisite wood of dwarf oaks. Through this delightful boscage, delightful in itself and in the shade it gives on fervent days, the way lies, as a grassy path. Great grey boulders, covered with lichen, show on either side, in the half light, and the foliage of the oaks grows in wonderfully large lustrous leaves, by favour of this wonderful climate. It is all so quiet. Few people are ever met here ; but, here and there, at infrequent intervals one finds a retired villa, three-parts hidden behind the shrubs of its ample grounds. One such you pass, and see amid the woodland trees a little tombstone to a pet dog ; “ ‘ Bruiser,’ a good dog ” : concise, yet all-comprising.

When rounding successive points, new and ever more beautiful views are disclosed, and sublime thoughts rise, but they do not find full expression in that form, because of the loose stones and fragments of rock that everywhere prodigally strew the cliff-paths. Midway between Wooda Bay and Heddon's Mouth, a lovely waterfall comes spouting down the face of the cliff, in a little bight, the sides of it fringed with moss and ferns, and at the foot a tangle of trees and bushes that have found a precarious foothold. Here fragments of rock, like some prehistoric rubbish-heap, threaten unstable ankles.

These cliffs are simply huge masses of loosely compacted rubbish—laminated stone embedded in ochreous, friable earth—held together largely by surface vegetation : gorse, grass, and rock-plants, and in places the hillsides resemble engineers'

spoil-banks. But the horned breed of sheep that browse here keep a wonderful foothold, in places where no human being would dare trust himself on the slopes, covered with slippery grass. The cliff-path is usually solitary, and the occasional, nearly human cough of these only living creatures is therefore at first somewhat startling, in its ap-



HEDDON'S MOUTH.

parently half-apologetic note, like that of some Paul Pry, who "hopes he don't intrude." Their clattering walk along the loose flakes of stone, so plentifully strewn about, is oddly like unseen people roughly handling piles of dinner-plates.

Presently Heddon's Mouth bursts upon the view, with all the force of a revelation. To observe the coast-line from the deck of a vessel—for example, from one of the big steamers that pass

quite close in, on the way to Ilfracombe—may seem (and is) a luxurious way of seeing these cliffs and their openings. No foot-soreness, no scrambling amid incredible rocks: only a patronising passing in review from an easeful attitude of observation. But then, strangely enough, this majestic succession of headlands, of bays, and “mouths” is flattened and fore-shortened and depreciated in a degree incredible to those who have not tried both methods. Heddon’s Mouth, for example, looks by no means remarkable from the sea. But viewed from either above or below, on land, its grandeur is exceptional. From this cliff-path on High Veer, whence you first see the deep and narrow valley, or gully, or, as a Central American might say, “cañon,” you look far up the valley in one direction, and in the other out to sea. The hills on either side are not rocky. They impress rather by their enormous size and simplicity of outline. Shelving down steeply to where the Heddon flows at the bottom, only an occasional outcrop of rock stands up. For the rest, they are clothed in patches and streaks with bracken and with a short, wiry innutritious grass, and very largely strewn from top to bottom with countless thousands of tons of rocky rubbish, blue-grey in general effect of colour, and in appearance like the refuse on the tip banks of mines. Oddly enough, such a generous distribution of waste material does not help to spoil the scenery. The hillsides end, seaward, in grey, red and yellow-brown cliffs, where an old limekiln, like a stone blockhouse fort,

lends a specious air of historic assault and battery to the scene. Here the Heddon stream comes trickling down among the boulders of the beach ; sometimes indeed, when thunderstorms have vexed the uplands, swirling down in a coffee-coloured tumult and staining a calm sea for a long distance out.

Winding footpaths lead up the lonely valley



“HUNTER'S INN.”

and through a wood, and then conduct to a well-known hostelry in these parts, the Hunter's Inn. For many long years this was a picturesque thatched house, but it was burnt down at last, in 1895, and the new “Hunter's Inn,” although it is built very charmingly and in good taste, and really is as picturesque as the one it replaces, has not yet existed long enough to compel the affections of the sentimental. There is a nameless something in these things, an elusive flavour, an

unexpected feeling, it may be, that the old inn was picturesque by accident, as it were, and was the natural product of its era and surroundings, while the new was created to be self-consciously pretty. It is a favourite resort of anglers, who, except in summer, when pedestrians and carriage-parties come this way, have the inn and the whole valley very much to themselves, for there is no neighbourly village and Trentishoe is a mile distant, half-way up one of the steepest of hills.

Trentishoe has a church of the Early English extremely rural type, with a little insignificant tower ; but, although it possesses this church of its own, no one would accuse it of being a village. Two cottages by the church, a little group half-way up hill, and another little group below, by the Heddon, constitute Trentishoe.

The moorland to which the traveller comes is the wild windy waste of Trentishoe Down and Holdstone Down, considerably over a thousand feet above the sea, scorching and drouthy in summer and ferociously cold in winter ; but these disadvantages, each in its season, have not prevented hopeful, would-be sellers of building-sites from erecting the usual notices of " this desirable " land to be on offer. It has come to this at last, that all land is in land-agents' jargon, " desirable," just as, conventionally, a naval or military officer is " gallant," members of Parliament are " honourable," and barristers " learned " : to name but a few of those tags and labels that nowadays mean so little.

Few are those who explore to the right hand on this upland, where Trentishoe Barrow seems to witness that, however *un*-desirable the site may really be for residences, Prehistoric Man found it eminently suitable as a burying-place. The "Great Hangman," the crowning height of these cliffs (1187 ft.), obtains its ill-flavoured name from



TRENTISHOE CHURCH.

an ignorant perversion of *Pen an maen* : the old Cornu-British for "the Hill of the Stone," namely, a rude, post-like monolith, standing something over five feet high. The "Pen" was lost in course of time and "an-maen" became by degrees "Hangman," when the legend that now attaches to the stone was duly invented to account

for the name. According to this thoroughly unveracious story, which old Fuller, who does not appear to have disbelieved it, no doubt heard from the peasantry, a sheep-stealer was crossing the hill with a sheep slung over his back, and sat down here to rest awhile, and, doing so, the sheep in its struggles slipped, and the rope tightening round the man's neck, he was strangled. Two difficulties, however, meet us here (supposing, for the moment, we take this tale seriously)—(1) How the sheep-stealer could have sat down to rest on a post over five feet high, and (2) How this strangling accident could possibly in any way have happened. Probably we may be met with the reply that the standing-stone is merely a monument of the affair, but the final quietus should be given the legend by the fact that there are numerous tales identical in every respect, all over England: and it is unthinkable that sheep-stealers were always being accidentally hanged in such numbers—and in a manner demonstrably impossible.

This region between Heddon's Mouth and Great Hangman Point is without doubt the most inaccessible nook along the coast. Roads avoid the neighbourhood of the gigantic cliffs that for the most part go sheer down into the sea, without sands or beaches at their base, six or seven hundred feet. And the combes, mouths, and valleys, that here and there let down some streams to the sea, are, if on a smaller scale than the gorge of Heddon's Mouth, even more rugged and difficult of ex-

ploration. Sherracombe—or “Sherry-come-out,” as the fishermen name it—is particularly notable for its stream that, rushing down this cleave in the hills, pours out in a fall of seventy feet over the rock-face. Somewhat east of it, over the hillside and down a perilous climb, is “Wild Pear Beach,” a lonely spot overhung with brambles and hawthorn bushes: the haws upon the thorns in autumn being the “wild pears” in question.

The Great Hangman ends in Blackstone Point and beach; a savage spot, now absolutely solitary, but once the scene, together with the neighbouring cliffs, of busy mining operations. Combemartin, round the next bend of coast, was for centuries famed for its silver mines, and in a less degree for its lead, iron, and copper; and here also rich lodes were evidently discovered at some remote period, for the cliffs are honeycombed with tunnels and caves excavated in the pursuit of wealth. No road exists to these old excavations, and the rock and ore extracted must either have been shipped off by long-vanished stagings, or hoisted hundreds of feet above by ropes. One of these tunnels extends nearly 350 feet into the rock, and with a plentiful supply of matches it is possible to stumble along it to a great distance. But scrambling in these wilds, in a climate such as this of Devonshire, is an undertaking of the most exhausting kind, and not to be embarked upon by any except the agile or the robust. This explorer, at any rate, is not likely to forget the

scramblings up and scramblings down involved, in company with showers of the loose stones that encumber the hillsides ; nor the astonishment exhibited at West Challacombe Farm on beholding a stranger, stumbling upon the place by accident, on the way to Combemartin.

There are remains in this old farmstead of a vanished importance, both in the thick walls carefully disposed and loopholed for defence, and in the old porch surmounted by a defaced coat of arms and the word "Pruz." It is said to have been the manor-house of a family of that name, long ago extinct, or its identity lost in the debased form, "Prowse."

And so at last, steeply—always steeply up or down in these parts—down a typical Devonshire lane to Combemartin, meeting on the way a truly Devonian farm-labourer, who remarked of the sultry heat that it was, "Law bless 'ee proper St. Lawrence weather."

"St. Lawrence weather?"

"Ees, fay ; braave an' hot, sure."

"But why St. Lawrence?"

"Aw, then ; daunt 'ee know ? St. Lawrence wer' king o' th' idlers, he wer'."

But why St. Lawrence should have that unenviable distinction is more than I can tell. There is, at any rate, an obvious connection between hot weather and the gridiron martyrdom of St. Lawrence.

"Lazy as David Lawrence's dog," is said to be a Scottish phrase : the "Lawrence" in this

instance being originally an imaginary "Larrence" who presided over the indolent. In Essex, on the other hand, your typical lazybones is "Hall's dog": *e.g.* "you're like Hall's dog, who was too lazy to bark."

CHAPTER VI

COMBEMARTIN, AND ITS OLD SILVER MINES—THE CHURCH—WATERMOUTH CASTLE—HELE

COMBEMARTIN, Combmartin, or Combe Martin, for it is written in all these ways, according to individual fancy—derives the proprietary part of its name from the “Sieur Martin de Turon,” who came over with the Conqueror and obtained the grant of these lands, together with Martinhoe. Local story tells how the last of the Martins of Combemartin lived in a moated manor-house off the lane near the church, and had an only son. One day the son went off hunting, and as he had not returned by nightfall, the drawbridge across the moat was raised as usual. It was thought he had stayed late, enjoying the hospitality of friends, and would not return until next day; but at midnight he came home and fell, with his horse, into the moat; both being drowned. Unable to endure the place afterwards, the last of the Martins dismantled the manor-house and left Combe-martin, never to return.

The manor has come, in turn, to a number of families, among them the Leys, one of whom built the extraordinary house, long since con-

verted into an inn, known as the "King's Arms," which, after the parish church, is the principal sight in the place. According to local legend, "Squire Ley" won a fortune at cards, and so built his residence with fifty-two windows, the number of cards in a pack. Hence the alternative name of the house in the mouths of the people of Combemartin, "The Pack of Cards." The interior discloses some panelled rooms, with beautifully decorated plaster ceilings of Renaissance character; but the exterior, covered with white-washed rough-cast plaster, and designed in a freakish manner, is more curious than beautiful. No one can see the house without wondering and remarking about it. A sundial, inscribed "C. L. 1752," on the south wall, was apparently placed there by one of the bygone Leys.

Combemartin is a long, long village, one mile and a quarter—length without breadth—lining the road that runs down to the sea at the bottom of a deep valley, and the inhabitants call it "Kuh-mart'n." Charles Kingsley in his time called it something else, something derogatory; nothing less offensive, if you please, than "mile-long man-stye." They do not think much of Charles Kingsley at Combemartin.

Perhaps it is not so squalid as in his day; at any rate, although the long-drawn street is not even now a pattern of neatness, it does not in these times merit quite so savage a description, even although the large population is made up chiefly of poor market-gardening folk. For Combemartin

is the place whence come most of the early fruit and vegetables for the supply of the neighbouring towns. The hotels, not only of Ilfracombe, but also of Lynton and Lynmouth, depend largely upon Combemartin for their choicest supply, and the gardens round about are quite celebrated for their strawberries and gooseberries. No one in the strawberry season, passing through Combemartin, has the least excuse for remaining ignorant



THE "PACK OF CARDS," COMBEMARTIN.

of the staple product of the neighbourhood, for numerous pertinacious women, girls, and small boys pervade that long street; offering bags of what is, perhaps, the most delicious fruit these isles produce. To purchase a basketful, you think, at one end of the street, is sufficient to pass you through its length without further challenge; but that is a vain thought. The Combemartin strawberry-vendors have the most generous conception of your capacity for their wares, and

appear to think that every bagful purchased is an excuse for another. They are apt not to be cheap, but they are undeniably fresh, and undoubtedly refreshing under the sweltering sun that scorches the blazing street.

There was a time when Combemartin was busy in a far different way. The silver mines of this rugged valley were famous so far back as the time of Edward I., and with varying fortunes they continued at intervals to the early years of the nineteenth century. Not until 1848 was the last heard of them. At the beginning of these things, it is recorded, 337 miners were brought from the Peak district of Derbyshire, to work the silver, tin, and lead. In 1296 "was brought to London, in finest silver, in wedges, 704 lb. 3 dwt. ; and the next year 260 miners were pressed out of the Peak and Wales—and great was the profit on silver and lead." According to Camden, the silver mines here in the reigns of Edward III. and Henry V. were found very useful in defraying the costs of the wars in France ; but for more than a century and a half afterwards the industry declined, to be revived in the reign of Queen Elizabeth. This revival was due to the enterprise of Adrian Gilbert and Sir Beavois Bulmer, who provided the working expenses and agreed with the landowner, one Richard Roberts, for half-profits. They realised £10,000 each ; the fortunate Roberts therefore appears to have sat still and twiddled his thumbs, and received £20,000. Out of this unearned increment he provided what is described as a " rich

and rare " cup of Combemartin silver, which he presented to William Bouchier, Earl of Bath, the Bouchiers being at that time great and powerful personages in these parts. It bore this whimsical inscription :

" In Martin's Comb long lay I hyd,
Obscur'd, deprest wth grossest soyle,
Debaséd much wth mixéd lead,
Till Bulmer came, whoes skill and toyle
Refiné me so pure and cleen,
As rycher no wheer els is seene.

" And adding yet a farder grace,
By fashion he did inable
Me worthy for to take a place
To serve at any Prince's table ;
Comb Martyn gave the Oare alone,
Bulmer fyning and fashion."

The mines were greatly troubled with the in-rush of water ; difficulties referred to in the verses inscribed upon a cup presented, like the other, in 1593, to Sir Richard Martin, Master of the Mint, and Lord Mayor of London. This weighed 137 ounces :

" When water workes in broaken wharfe
At first erected were,
And Beavis Bulmer wth his Art
The waters 'gan to reare,
Dispercéd I in earth did lye
Since all beginnings old,
In place cal'd Comb, wher Martin longe
Had hydd me in his molde,
I did no service on the earth,
Nor no man set me free,
Till Bulmer by his skill and charge
Did frame me this to be."

Floods again drowned the works, and although a report was presented to Parliament in 1659, and other timid attempts made, nothing was accomplished until 1796. Operations were continued for six years, and over nine thousand tons of ore sent to South Wales, for smelting. In 1813, and on to 1817, more ore was mined, but the cost exceeding the value of the silver obtained, the enterprise was again discontinued. In 1833 a company was formed, with a capital of £30,000, and the works were once more reopened. About half this sum was spent in sinking new shafts, and in machinery, but some very good lodes were discovered, and three dividends were paid out of profits. But eventually the shares were rigged up to a high premium on the Stock Exchange, and those who were well informed of the likelihood that the lode would not prove a lasting one got out at a profit, while credulous purchasers were left to witness the prosperity of the undertaking speedily melt away. By 1850, the last chapter of silver-mining at Combemartin was ended. The miners' rubbish-heaps still remain, and even at the present day the urchins paddling in the bay at low-water occasionally discover fragments of ore.

Hemp-growing and the manufacture of shoemakers' thread were also industries carried on very extensively in the reign of Queen Elizabeth ; but Combemartin has long been looked down upon as an abjectly poor place, and only its great church and the surrounding scenery save it from being

passed by in contempt by the writers of guide-books. Combemartin church tower, indeed, finds mention in a North Devon folk-rhyme, in which



COMBEMARTIN CHURCH.

it is placed, for due admiration, with those of Berrynarbor and Hartland :

“Hartland for length,
Berrynarbor for strength,
And Combemartin for beauty.”

It is a tall grey tower, in four stages, rising with some considerable impressiveness over an

Early English and Perpendicular building that has long been but ill cared for. The interior discloses chancel with nave and north aisle only, the roofs of that waggon-headed type usual in the West of England ; the walls daubed with a light blue wash. A fine fifteenth-century carved wooden rood-screen, in a much worn condition, has been shamefully used in the past, the frieze having been filled in with plaster in 1727, according to the date inscribed on the work. The initials, " J. P., T. H.," probably those of the churchwardens who perpetrated the outrage, prove that, so far from being ashamed of themselves they even took pride in their work. A number of interesting bench-ends remain, among them a delightfully carved little lizard, who, unfortunately, has lost his head.

Some queer inscriptions in the churchyard, whose like, now that education penetrates every nook and corner, will no longer be perpetrated, arouse a passing smile : among them this extraordinary effort :—

HERE LYETH

IOHAN ASH, SHE DIED IN SEPTEMBER

J668

loe here I slepe in duft till christ my deare
And Sweet Redeemer in the clouds Appeare

HERE LYETH THE BODY OF HnmphTy she who
died y 19 day OF NOVembER 1681.

Bacon-Shakespeare fanatics have made cryptograms out of less eccentric lettering than this.

In these latter days Combemartin is making a strenuous effort to be regarded as a " literary land-

mark." It is all on account of Miss Marie Corelli's novel, "The Mighty Atom," and a certain class of visitors sometimes come over from Ilfracombe attracted by vague rumours of it. They are the kind of people who, content to remain below and idly examine the ever-open gates of the rood-screen, supposed on insufficient grounds to be symbolic of the heavenly gates, which "shall not be shut at all by day, for there shall be no night there," say to their younger companions, desirous of climbing the tower: "I'll stop down 'ere, while you go hup."

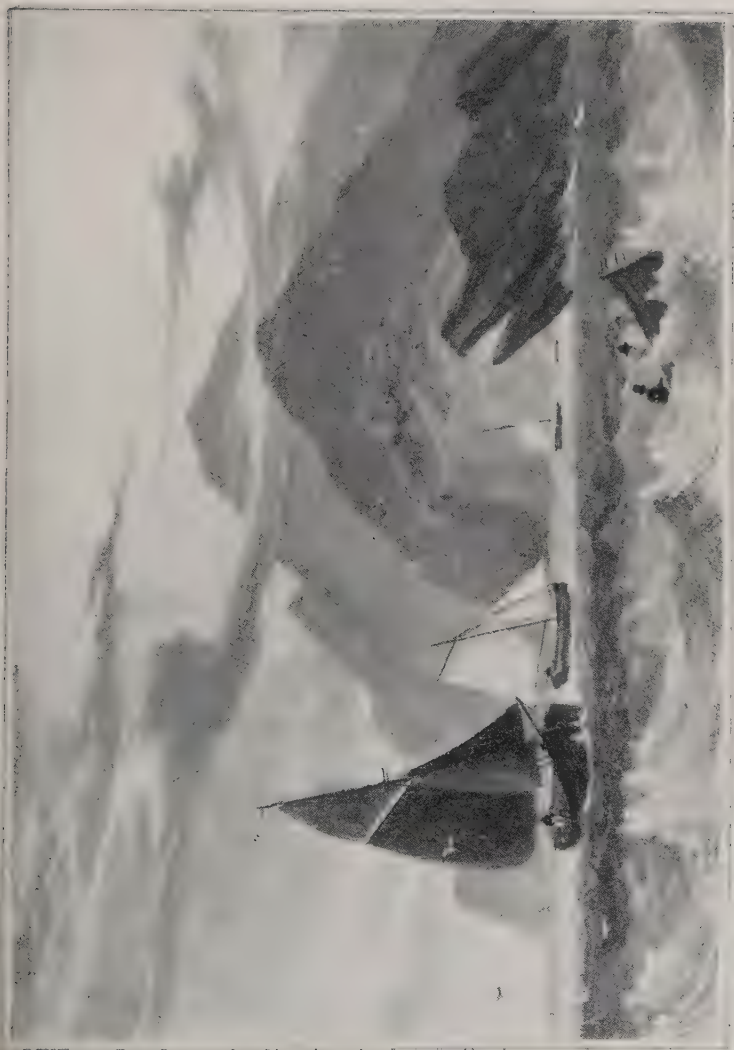
The local photographer makes a brave display of picture-postcards of the village and of the sexton who appears in the book as "Reuben Dale," but the thing seems to hang fire. James Norman was the original of "Reuben Dale," and the present sexton is alert to show you his grave, whether you be interested or not. Norman died, aged 54, in 1898, and, it seems, the rector refused to allow the pseudonym to be placed on the epitaph, by way of advertising the novelist. You are told he declared that he "buried a man, not a miff" (?myth). Apparently the rector did not approve of "The Mighty Atom."

Local gossip tells how Miss Corelli informed Norman he was to be made a prominent character in the story, and that the circumstance would make his fortune, as sexton. It proved the ruin of him, instead; for imagining himself a public character, he took himself and the increased tips he obtained from curious visitors, off to the

“ King’s Arms,” or, maybe, the “ Castle ” ; and, what with too much drink and a consumptive tendency, he did not long remain to pose for the inquisitive. His knowledge of ancient ecclesiastical arrangements and the uses and purport of things, does not appear—judging from the novel, which is understood to report him “ as nearly as possible ” in his own words—to have been more reliable than that of the average sexton, or verger, and we all know what broken reeds they are, to rely upon for information.

According to his tale, sufficient for the many simple folk who are ready for any legend, the “ altar gates ”—he meant the doors in the rood-screen—“ Do what ye will wi’ ’em, they won’t shut, see. That shows they was made ’fore the days o’ Cromwell. For in they times all the gates o’ th’ altars was copied arter the pattern o’ Scripture which sez : ‘ An’ the gates o’ Heaven shall never be shut, either by day or by night.’ ” So now we know !

The road to Ilfracombe winds round Combe-martin Bay, and, rising and falling abruptly, comes down to Watermouth. Here an almost land-locked bay, with a little strand, and hills on either side, partly wooded, forms a haven, where it is almost always calm, even when storms are raging and a heavy sea running outside Widemouth Head and Burrow Nose, the two enclosing points. The headlands are honeycombed with caves, prominent among them Smallmouth and Briary caves. Like most things in the neighbourhood



GREAT HANGMAN HILL, AND ENTRANCE TO COMBEMARTIN HARBOUR.

[After W. Daniell, R.A.]

of Ilfracombe, they are to be visited only by payment. In every respect the best way to reach them is by taking one of the rowing-boats that, with competitive boatmen, are always to be found here in summer. Watermouth Castle, looking grandly out from its sloping lawns upon the sea, should have a story. The ivy-clad, romantic-looking, turreted pile wears as genuine an air of antiquity as Lee "Abbey" itself, but candour—



WIDEMOUTH BAY.

we must all be candid when the local guide-books are so explicit—obliges me to confess it was built in 1826, when feudal castellans were things of a remote past.

But stay, there *is* something of a story belonging to Watermouth Castle, for it was here that one of Miss Marie Corelli's funny villains, the "Sir Charles Lascelles, Baronet," of "The Mighty Atom," stayed, as one of a house-party. You know

at once, on being introduced to him in those pages, that he is a bad Bart. We must not blame him for that ; the baronets of fiction are always bad : they can't help it ; it has to be. Moreover, he drawls, and acknowledges his " doosid habits of caprice " : so it is at once perceived that he is bad after the ancient formula of fifty years ago. Any modern wicked baronet would in the like circumstances describe himself, in up-to-date style, as an " erratic rotter." Which is the better phrase, I will not pretend to say.

In between Widemouth Head and the succeeding headland of Rillage Point lies Samson's Bay, followed by Hele Bay, enclosed on the side nearest Ilfracombe by Hillsborough, *i.e.*, " Helesborough " Hill. Hele beach and its hamlet are now practically part of Ilfracombe town.

There is not, as a rule, much entertainment in local guide-books, but occasionally some precious ore may be mined, out of the extravagant but barren language they commonly employ. There are, however, very few pennyweights of amusement to be extracted from such tons of boredom. But here, for once in a way, is a little nugget, taken sparkling from an otherwise very empty vein, descriptive of Hele : " Hele, with its picturesque limekiln and cottages, almost hugging one another around the village school, deep down in a dell and surrounded by flourishing trees." It is a pleasing picture, this, of the love of the amorous, but coy, limekiln, for the equally ardent but bashful cottages, and it moves me to

lyrically celebrate the neglect of opportunities suggested :

Behind the school and trees they stood,
And almost hugged—the scene was so secluded ;
Just as, in ferný grot, or flow'ry wood
(When we were younger, be it understood,
And ardent), sometimes I and you did.

The kiln was hot and eager, and
The cottages themselves were rather forward ;
And, you must now most clearly understand,
It was a quiet, most secluded strand,
With none in sight, or land or shoreward.

When love and I roamed far away,
In quiet dell, I'd fondly kiss and squeeze her.
Did I refrain those tributes. Well-a-day !
There was the very deuce to pay :
I found my conversation failed to please her.

x x x x x x

And yet I hear, with shoulders sharply shrugged,
They only—" *almost* hugged ! "

CHAPTER VII

“ ’COMBE ” IN HISTORY—MODERN ’COMBE—THE OLD CHURCH

ILFRACOMBE occupies one of the strangest sites on this strangely contorted coast. Down upon it, on either hand, look the great rocky hills of Hillsborough and the razor-backed, spiny ledges of the Runnacleaves, and the Tors ; while amidst the winding roads of the town itself run smaller hills and vales, and down by the sea, where other sea-side resorts usually have a conventional flat parade running by the shore, there are the Lantern Hill, overlooking the harbour, and the Capstone Hill, placed just where the usual sea-front would be, if the site of Ilfracombe were other than it is. Fortunately it is not. Between the two is Compass Hill. The Capstone Hill—it was formerly, and should still be, “ Capstan ”—runs up towards the sea from the town, and presents, as it were, a lawn, inclined at an angle of something like forty-five degrees. When people most furiously do make holiday, in August, this expanse is covered over, day by day, with hundreds of figures, looking quite tiny in the scale of things. Sometimes, when Sunday Schools, or other institutions, come to



E. D. Percival

CAPSTONE HILL AND THE CONCERT PARTIES.

[Ilfracombe.]

Ilfracombe for their annual day out, they display their massed forces in living devices or letters of the alphabet, on the hillside, in view of the whole town.

There is not, it has already been shown, any conventional front ; and indeed at one time it was only possible to approach the shore at Ilfracombe at infrequent and isolated spots, such as Wildersmouth, or Chain Beach. That was in the times before seaside holidays were invented, and when Ilfracombe was only a small port. When the modern town began to rise, it was felt that a little more of the sea would be thought desirable, and consequently the present “ Capstone Parade ” was constructed in 1843, in the more or less perpendicular face that Capstone Hill presents to the waves. It is a semicircular roadway carved out of the rock, with rocky cliff above and more beneath, and beneath that, the sea, dashing in violently. The Capstone “ Parade ” has after all, you see, the conventional name ; but, happily, it is not the conventional thing.

Since we cannot treat of Ilfracombe without touching upon its ancient history, it had better be done at once, and an end made of it forthwith. To begin with, it is not certain how the name derived. In Saxon times it was “ Alfreincombe,” and from that has been hazarded the theory of its having once belonged to Alfred the Great. Then stepped in that eternal factor of the letter H, and it became “ Halfrincombe.” I wonder if any contemporary, uncertain in his aspirates, ever

called the great monarch, "Halfred"? It is a fearful thought.

Then the place, having been crowned with an H, of course those who should have kept the letter, vulgarly elided it, and the name became Ilfard-combe," or "Ilfridecombe," and so remained until, with the introduction of printing, the style became irrevocably fixed at what it is now.

The town was then nothing more than a few waterside houses down by the harbour, that curious, almost pool-like inlet intended by nature for the purpose, but the place speedily prospered, chiefly by reason of this natural haven, and in 1346 the port was sufficiently wealthy and populous to be able to assist Edward the Third with a contingent of six ships and ninety-six seamen, to help in the French war and the reduction of Calais. That appears to have been the high-water mark of Ilfracombe's old-time prosperity, for thenceforward Barnstaple and Bideford took up the position of rivals, and wrested away much of its trade.

Little is heard of the town until the beginning of the Civil War. The sentiment of the townsfolk was strongly anti-Royalist, and it occurred, therefore, to Sir Francis Doddington, a Royalist commander who had helped his cause well at Appledore, that it would be the properest thing to teach them a lesson while the success of his party there was still fresh, to serve as a moral lesson here. What happened we may read from a contemporary account, in the *Kingdom's Weekly Intelligencer*, September 3rd, 1644. It is couched something in

the sarcastic vein : “ At a town called Ilford-combe in Devonshire, that saint-like Cavalier, Sir Francis Doddington, set that town on fire, burnt 27 houses in the town, but was beaten out by the townsmen and sailors, and lost many of his men.”

So the teacher was taught, but the Roundhead success was not lasting, for, before the end of the month, Doddington had captured the town, together with “ twenty pieces of ordnance, twenty barrels of powder, and two hundred stand of arms. The Royalists then held Ilfracombe until April 1646.

The port continued to decline, and is described by Blackmore, speaking of the eighteenth century, in the “ Maid of Sker,” as “ a little place lying in a hole, and with great rocks all around it, fair enough to look at, but more easy to fall down than to get up them ”—the laws of gravity being no more suspended here than elsewhere.

One of the many inlets here deserves particular note. This is Rapparee Cove, opening out just beyond the harbour.

Rapparee Cove is known to have borne that name certainly as far back as 1598, when it appears to have originated in some obscure connection with the Earl of Tyrone’s rebellion in Ireland, where the bulk of the rebels were armed with a species of small pike, called “ raparys.” North Devon seems to have been in general a refuge for the fugitives from Ireland, and Ilfracombe, as a recognised port for the south of Ireland, to have been particularly favoured by them. Neighbour-

ing Combemartin retained until 1837 an odd reminiscence of that time, suggested, no doubt, by the refugees. This was an annual pageant, or merry-making, the hunting of the Earl of "Rone"; in which hobby-horses, much rough music, and a considerable deal of drunkenness figured.

Rapparee Cove was in 1782 the scene of the disastrous wreck of a large vessel, variously stated to have been a prize captured from the Spanish by Rodney, or a Bristol slave-ship. For long afterwards, following storms, the beach was a happy hunting-ground for gold and silver coins, and for the less desirable relics of the many drowned, in the shape of skulls and bones.

The entrance to Ilfracombe harbour has been lighted from the earliest times by a beacon on the hill overlooking it, called, from that friendly gleam for the incoming mariner, "Lantern Hill." Whose care it was, thus to befriend the sailor, we are not told; but, from the old-time readiness of the Church to perform such-like good deeds, and from the undoubted fact that the building on the hilltop was once a chapel dedicated to St. Nicholas, it would seem that those who tended the light were no mere secular lighthouse men.

Whatever may have been the character of the old chapel in past ages, the interior is no longer of any interest, disclosing only a plain whitewashed room. The time-worn exterior, partly overgrown with ivy, and the lantern, crowned with a fish for weather-vane, afford more satisfaction. A light

is still shown at nights, from the end of September until the beginning of May.

The harbour, long, like Ilfracombe in general, the manorial property of the Bouchiers, Earls of Bath, in succession to the Champernownes, Bonvilles, Nevilles, and others, and then of the Bouchier Wreys, now belongs, together with Lantern Hill, to the Corporation.



IN THE HARBOUR, ILFRACOMBE.

Now let us turn to a consideration of Ilfracombe to-day. People with a passion for comparisons and parallels—dear, good people who would trace a family likeness between an elephant and a dromedary—seek in conversation to find points of resemblance between Ilfracombe and (say) Torquay, Hastings, Brighton ; half-a-dozen other seaside resorts. They are mostly amateurs at the art of discovering likenesses where they do not exist, and may be excused. But there have been

those who in cold print have instituted resemblances. For these there is no excuse, acceptance, or encouragement. Ilfracombe is—just Ilfracombe, and not only does Ilfracombe insist upon its own individuality and declares “I am I,” but every other among the half-dozen naturally demands the like justice.

The nearest parallel is, of course, to be found in this same county of Devon ; but that is sufficiently remote, geographically, and in most other ways. A superficial likeness, in its hilly site, (and in its lack of sands) may be discovered to Torquay, but that is all. Torquay is in greater part residential and quietly aristocratic, with a tendency to pious works and clerical tea-fights : Ilfracombe is a “popular resort,” and becomes ever more so ; with what it would be a mere inadequacy to term a “tendency” to open-air concerts and amusements for the crowd. We who stay, communing with nature, elegantly housed in the more refined hotels of Lynmouth, or the even yet primitive Clovelly, shudder at the August crowds at Ilfracombe, and recount across the dinner-tables, what time the tender evening closes in upon the quiet harbour, how we adventured there for half a day and watched the trippers at their strenuous tripping. Indeed, those who people Ilfracombe so numerous in the height of the season go there determined to have a “good time,” and expend a considerable amount of energy during the day in securing that desirable consummation ; but when evening is come they unanimously



LANTERN HILL, ILLACOMET.

Geo. W. Davis, R. I.

clamour to be amused : hence the entertainments in the conservatory-like structure, known officially as the "Victoria Pavilion," and unofficially and shamefully as the "Cucumber Frame" ; and hence also the open-air concerts on the "Montebello Lawn," and elsewhere : "Montebello" being a name, the most unprejudiced must agree, as little characteristic of Devon as are the "pierrots," who make alleged fun for the aimless crowd. The days are indeed past when we were "insular." We have, instead, become more than a thought too cosmopolitan. Ods bodikins ! " as Sir Richard Grenville might have said, " beshrew me, but these things like me not."

The study of seaside "holiday amusements," from the time when the sea and the countryside themselves palled, and the holiday-maker ceased to be able to amuse himself, might form an interesting theme for the social philosopher. Here we can but glance at the subject, and slightly trace the first footsteps of the nigger-minstrel and the barrel-organist, down to the German bands who extract unwilling tribute from a long-suffering public, and the piano-organ men, the immediate precursors of the "pierrots" aforesaid. It should not be difficult to become a "pierrot." You procure a silly suit of white linen clothes, of no particular fit, that might have been made for a person four times your own size, whiten your silly face, place on your idiotic head a foolish sugar-loaf white felt hat, and, with a garnish of red or black balls, according to fancy, there you are, plus a little native impudence,

fully equipped. I do not love the old burnt-cork nigger minstrel more, I only dislike him less than this ostensibly French importation that is already so hackneyed ; but I declare I could welcome the return of even *his* extravagant figure, beery breath, and untutored banjo, by way of relief.

But these are, doubtless, the views of an unreasonable recluse. They are not shared by the holiday crowds, nor by the ruling powers that control the destinies of Ilfracombe. Entertainers fill a "felt want," felt very acutely by the class of people who most resort to the town in these days, and the governing body of the town develops it along these lines of least resistance. Only, as I stand, when darkness has fallen over the summer evening, a little aloof, and look down from some convenient height upon the garish lights and the blatant merriment, the black hills seem, to this observer, to frown reproachfully upon the scene, and the twinkling stars seem like so many bright tear-drops for the folly of it all. In short, the romantic natural setting of Ilfracombe is utterly unsuited to this sort of thing. One may deplore, yet not resent, it at Yarmouth or at Blackpool, where Nature is at her tamest, but found amid the bold rocks and frowning cliffs of North Devon, one does both. Nor is there any easy escape anywhere within the town. The brilliantly-lighted Pavilion glitters across the lawns, under the Capstone Hill, and across the intervening space you dimly see, maybe, a jigging figure within, executing a clog-dance. You may even

hear the clatter of his clogs, drowned at last in a very hurricane of applause.

If you remain, you must, perforce, listen to the celebration of mysterious sprees, in this wise :

(*Confidentially*)

“ I went out on the tiddly-hi.

Oh, fie !

On the sly !

I came home with a head ;

I put me boots in the bed

An' slep' on the mat instead ;

Yus (*proudly*) I'd bin out on the tiddly-iddly,
twiddly, fiddly, hi, hi, HI. (*Crescendo*).

“ When you've bin out on the tiddly-hi.

Oh, my !

(You try !)

You feel confoundedly cheap, and dry.

' You've bin on the bend,' the guv'nor said,

' You've bin painting it red.'

I'd bin wanting a rise,

But 'e giv me a nasty surprise ;—

For (*dolefully, diminuendo*) I got the push instead ;

An' *that's* the result of goin' out-on-the-blooming—
tiddly, iddly (*but, with returning confidence,*
fortissimo) HI, TI-HI.”

But, wearying for local colour, rather than for more of this sort of thing, which, after all, is done very much better in the London music-halls, you resort to the harbour. There indeed—if anywhere—you look for something characteristically Devonian. But even there the streets are brilliant till late at night with dining-rooms and the like—

merciful powers, how every one must eat and drink at Ilfracombe—and the fishermen, if the samples heard by the present auditor are representative, are pre-eminently the foulest-mouthed to be found on many a varied coast-line.

I know not what the quiet holiday-maker may find to do at night at Ilfracombe. He may, at any rate, go to bed, but even there he is pursued by sounds of revelry. He undresses to the refrain of tiddly-iddly, diddy-dum-dey, or something equally intellectual, and his first dreams mingle with the distant, but distinctly audible,

“ I ’eard the pitter-patter of ’er feet,
Oh, so neat !
Pitter-patter on the pyvement of the street.
On ’er fyce I tried to look,
An’—good grycious, ’twas the cook ! ”—

And thus, in the Cockney celebration of mean intrigue, the melody merges into the mesh of visions.

What, indeed, shall the lonely visitor to Ilfracombe do with himself in the evenings ? He may wander around the walks of the Capstone Parade or the Tors, and feel himself reduced to a singular loneliness amid the amorous couples who there most do congregate ; or feel not less lonely in exploring the endless “ gardens,” “ terraces,” and “ crescents,” where every house is a boarding-house ; or, in the finer flavour of euphonious avoidance of the commonplace truth, “ an establishment for the reception of visitors.” There, alas ! he

feels himself lonely indeed, as, passing the endless array of lighted rooms with open windows, he sees the holiday-making families assembled.

But morning in Ilfracombe is more endurable for such an one. Bustling, democratic Ilfracombe has, then, none of that illuminated vulgarity and would-be, shop-soiled wickedness that characterise it overnight. Nature gets her chance again in the light of day, and in the long, narrow High Street you see the crowds in pursuit of natural enjoyments. Some are shopping, some are making for the bathing-coves ; others are going on one or other of the many coaching excursions to "places of interest in the adjacent country," as the notices have it. It may be observed that not yet have motor waggonettes and the like replaced the coaches and other horsed vehicles at Ilfracombe, and that drivers and guards still affect the traditional red-coats associated of old with coaching. More than ever are there popular joys attendant upon one of these coaching-trips to Berrynarbor, to Combemartin, or Lynton ; for in these fiercely enterprising times the local photographers take views, day by day, of the laden coaches as they prepare to set out ; and so, at trifling cost, you have a permanent pictorial voucher as to the way in which you fleeted the sunny hours at Ilfracombe. Not, by any means, that all hours are sunny, this especial spot in North Devon being notoriously rainy ; but it is at worst but an April-like raininess, and even as the showers come down, the sun that is to dry

them up smiles through the watery sky. Thus, no one minds the "soft weather" of Ilfracombe.

It is many, many years since Charles Kingsley wrote of Ilfracombe in this manner: "Be sure, if you are sea-sick or heart-sick, or pocket-sick either, there is no pleasanter place of cure than this same Ilfracombe, with quiet nature and its quiet luxury, its rock fairyland and its sea walks, its downs and combes, its kind people, and, if possible, its still kinder climate, which combines the soft warmth of South Devon with the bracing freshness of the Welsh mountains." The climate is the only thing that has not suffered change since that description was penned. The kind people are, doubtless, at bottom, as kind as of old—such of them as are Devonshire folk—but they are now urban (which, despite the etymology of the word, does not now indicate what is in these times understood by "urbanity")—and to be urban in these days is to be, colloquially, "on the make." Ilfracombe, in fact, like any other large seaside resort, has turned its scenery and its climate to commercial account, and, as the local Urban District Council frankly acknowledges, exists for, and on, the visitor. It is a town of hotels, lodging-houses, and boarding-houses, few of whose proprietors can be natives. All the natural features are exploited, and, lest the visitor be in doubt what there is to see and do, the Council has taken in hand the task of placing notices in prominent places, indicating the things to be seen and to be done. Thus, kindly shep-

herded, you lose all personal enterprise, and do, like an obedient fellow, what you are bidden. From these official productions you learn instantly the features of the place, as thus :

" Capstone Parade and Hill. Bands. *Free.*

Victoria Pavilion. Concerts. Morning and Evening. *Free.*

Cairn Top. Pleasure Grounds. *Free.*

Hillsborough Hill Pleasure Grounds. *Free.*

Hele Bay and Beach. *Free.*

Chamberscombe and Score Woods. Ideal Picnic Spots. *Free."*

There are, however, in this list so many things that, obviously, could not be anything else but free, that the ordinary stranger stands struck with astonishment at the moderation which has not included on the " free " list such items as the Bristol Channel, the air, and the roads. But where so many things are trumpeted as " free," the suspicious person looks for others that are not ; and, sure enough, he discovers them, in—

" Pier, and Lantern Hill. *Toll, 2d.*

Tors Walks. *Toll, 2d. "*

It is not, of course, the fault of the local authority that the Tors Walks are subject to toll, for the place is private property ; but the fact is especially unfortunate in a place like Ilfracombe, lacking sands or foreshore, except the one tiny beach of Wildersmouth Bay.

Nor can you well bathe in the sea without paying for the " privilege."

The present circumstances of Ilfracombe are largely conditioned (to use for once a horribly

illegitimate verb) by its nearness to the great manufacturing and seaport towns of Bristol and South Wales. Cardiff, Swansea, Barry, are all within easy reach by steamboat, only twenty miles across Channel, and the excursion to Ilfracombe from all these places is a favourite one. At any time in the summer, from four to six very large steamers from these places, lying in the harbour, form a familiar sight, and the "white funnel" and the "red funnel" steamers are very fine, commodious and well-found boats. They bring an immense concourse of people into the town, some to stay, but the majority for only a few hours. Compared, of course, with such places as Margate or Ramsgate, these numbers would not be remarkable, but then you have to remember the difference in the sizes of the respective places. Margate has a reputation for vulgarity. All classes resort there, and so they do here. Ilfracombe has hotels as expensive on the one hand, or as cheap on the other, as you could wish, and, I doubt not, there are cultured visitors to be discovered in them. "Discovered" is, indeed, precisely the word, for they would require some seeking amid the mass. It is the commonest of errors to think vulgarity is the especial attribute of the poorer, or even of the middle classes. It is rather a condition of mind than of pocket, and resides in every social stratum. It is only the snob who thinks the poor are by reason of their poverty, vulgar, or the rich, by favour of their wealth, refined. There are vulgar

millionaires and cultured crossing-sweepers, for all the world to see. But the intellectually vulgar seem to select Ilfracombe, above all places on the North Devon coast, as their habitat. Originally a very delightful place, they are reducing it to their own level, aided and abetted by the local building fury, in which landowners are unwittingly, in destroying the natural beauties of the locality, engaged in the antique game of killing the goose that lays the golden eggs. To descend from the language of hyperbole, they are erecting tall terraces of houses on all the outskirts, with the result, already seen, of shutting out the views over sea and cliffs ; and with other results, presently to accrue, that the town will be overbuilt and even the vulgarian miss the vanished rustic graces.

It is amusing to note how antipathetic are those who resort by choice to Lynmouth and Clovelly to those others who find in Ilfracombe everything to satisfy them. To make excursion from Ilfracombe to Lynton or Clovelly and back in half a day forms an easy and delightful trip, but to *see* those places and look upon them with an amused and indulgent eye is sufficient for your typical Ilfracombe visitor. Such an one would consider it impossible to stay there. I heard such a critic describe Lynmouth as an 'ole (or was it "a nole" ?). Geographically, of course, she was correct, for Lynmouth, by the seashore, is several hundred feet below the summit of Holiday Hill ; but of course we all know that a 'ole (or even a

hole) is more, in this conjunction, than a mere geographical expression. It was a term of contempt, in this instance, for a place without open-air concerts and minstrels, a place where you are reduced to amusing yourself ; a horrible fate when you find yourself so empty of entertainment to yourself. *Per contra*, those who stay by choice at Clovelly and Lynmouth, and adventure for half a day to sample Ilfracombe, have been known to describe it, in their way, as "vulgar." But, since they cannot stay to see Ilfracombe at night, if they wish to return that day to the place of their choice, they cannot know how vulgar it can be.

This is not to say that Ilfracombe has lacked due recognition. It has been patronised by the most distinguished, and it is in recognition of this fact that what was once the "Britannia" Hotel, down by the harbour, is now nothing less than the "Royal Britannia."

There are great numbers of amiable, but characterless, people, who have so little individuality or so much exaggerated loyalty for Royal personages and reverent respect for the aristocracy, that the well-advertised fact of those bright and shining ones having visited this resort, that, and the other is sufficient to make the fortune of those places. Many years ago, the then Prince of Wales made holiday at Ilfracombe, and the local guide-books have never allowed visitors to forget the fact, even although it was when he was a boy. He went out riding a pony known afterwards to fame as "Bobby." Alas ! poor Bobby. As the



E. D. Percival

ILFRACOMBE.

[Ilfracombe.]

guide-books have cleverly discovered, even "the fact of having carried a Royal personage did not render Bobby immortal, and his death deprived Ilfracombe of an attraction to its visitors, and a large income to its owner." It was a sorry thing for Bobby that ever he carried a Prince of Wales, for, ever afterwards, he was condemned to the drudgery of long, long days carrying the children of the lower middle (and super-loyal) classes. To seat little Frankie or little Cissie upon that sanctified pony was, in some vague way, to come into touch with the Royal family; to give him a carrot was equivalent to (but less expensive than) presenting a purse to a Princess at a charity meeting. Bobby was transfigured, like the objects sung by the satirist:

"A clod—a piece of orange-peel—
An end of a cigar—
Once trod on by a princely heel,
How beautiful they are!"

But the poor animal's glory was hardly earned. Loyalty, expressed in terms of an unending burden of children, at last wore him out, and he died.

For a loving list of the great who have visited the town, you must please to look in those guide-books for yourselves, but we learn that "no year passes without some distinguished personage treading the ground of beautiful Ilfracombe, and giving another start to a new chapter of the town's progress as a fashionable resort." That remains true; I, myself, was there last year,

The old parish church has of late been little altered. It stands high at the west end of the principal street, midway between the deeps of the harbour and the alpine heights on which the railway terminus is placed, and its approach is by a steep flight of stone stairs.

There is something of almost every architectural period in Ilfracombe church, but the workmanship was ever of so homely a character that the styles all blend into one rude mass. The tower ascends in a singular diminishing fashion. In the large and crowded churchyard you notice most distinctly, as you are indeed intended to do, a stone recording no fewer than nine centenarians who lived and died at Ilfracombe between 1784 and 1897. This by way of advertisement of the astonishing salubrity of the place ; but an inhabitant of Brighton chancing this way would be amused. At Brighton there are generally to be found half a dozen hale and hearty centenarians.

Odd names are not infrequent ; for example, "Humphrey Rottenberry," and Ann of the same name, who died aged 94, and thus nearly became one of those witnesses to the supreme value of the Ilfracombe air. Herapaths, too, abound.

The interior of the church is something of an architectural puzzle, owing to the additions made in succeeding ages. The grotesque thirteenth-century stone corbels supporting the waggon-roof and its array of wooden angels, are particularly interesting. They form a strange assemblage of monsters, in which some see only a freakish

imagination ; but many of them are illustrations of legends once current in this romantic shire. Prominent among them are the lean cow, Chichevache, and the well-conditioned cow, Bycorn : the first in so sorry a condition because her only food,



ILFRACOMBE CHURCH-TOWER.

according to the old story, was good women ; the second so plump by reason of her diet being exclusively good and long-suffering husbands—and such, we all know, abound.

Among the curious monuments of the Parmyn-ter family is a tablet with an epitaph little, if any-

thing, less than blasphemous in modern thought, to Katherine Parmynter. Of her we read :

“ Scarce ever was Innocence and Prudence so lovely : But had you known her conversation, you would have said she was the daughter of Eve before she tasted the apple. A servant of Christ Jesus sought her to wife ; but his master thought him unworthy, and soe tooke her unto Himself.”

With much more to the same effect. This crown and glory of her sex died in 1660.

The monument of Captain Richard Bowen, who fell at Teneriffe, in the service of his country, has a lengthy inscription, which is, however, not unworthy of being copied here, as a very full-blown example of the florid patriotic style that once obtained :

Sacred to the Memory
of RICHARD BOWEN, ESQ.,
Captain of His Majesty's Ship, the *Terpsichore*
This Monument was erected by his afflicted Father.
Of Manners affable and liberal, in private Life :
He was beloved by his Family, and respected by his Friends
He was generous, humane, and modest,
And they who knew him best esteemed him most
By the vigorous Exertion of superior Abilities
with which Providence had blest him,
He overcame Difficulties surmountable by no common Powers :
And raised himself to Eminence in a Profession where Eminence
is most difficult.
Amongst distinguished Characters he was himself distinguished
In the Service of his King and Country he was faithful, vigilant,
and zealous :
In the Day of Peril he gave Proofs
of the most daring Intrepidity corrected by the coolest Judgment.
Full of Resources, Spirit, and the most decisive Activity, he at
once humbled the Foe and saved the Friend.

The Post of Danger, to which he was so often appointed,
unequivocally attests his superior Courage, Abilities, and
Patriotism,

Of a life thus spent, and spending, in the sacred Cause of his
King and Country

The Career was stopt, in the unfortunate Enterprize at Teneriffe,
(under the Command of Rear-Admiral *Sir Horatio Nelson*, K.B.)
where he fell !

Yet full in the Path of his Duty and of Glory,
at the Head of his own Ship's Company ;

on the 24th of July 1797 ; in the 37th Year of his Age.

Of such a Man and such a Relation it were unjust to say less :
whilst his Friends are soothed by the pleasing Reflection
that as long as private Worth or public Virtue command Respect
and Veneration,

He will live in the Remembrance of his Family
and the Regret of a grateful Country.

. . . *Usque postera*
Crescet laude recens . . .

CHAPTER VIII

LUNDY—HISTORY OF THE ISLAND—WRECK OF THE *MONTAGU*—LUNDY OFFERED AT AUCTION— DESCRIPTION

To visit Lundy from Ilfracombe is one of the favourite excursions with adventurous holiday-makers. Lundy (no one who has any pretensions to correctitude speaks of Lundy "Island": the terminal "y" originally "ey," itself signifying an isle) lies twenty-three miles to the north-west, almost mid-way between the coasts of North Devon and South Wales, where the Atlantic surges meet the waters of the Bristol Channel. The excursion-steamers that visit the island frequently in summer are broad in the beam, of large tonnage, powerfully engined, and in every way well-found; but there are always those among the company who are seen to be more or less uneasy upon "the sea, the open sea, the ever fresh, the ever free." These are not true sons and daughters of Britannia, you think, as, gazing upon their pallid faces, the story of how "the captain cried 'heave,' and the passengers all heft," recurs to your reminiscent mind.

But there seems still that spice of original discovery and exploration of the little-known, clinging to the trip to Lundy, which impels even

succeeded ; his elder brother, Sir Geoffrey, having been slain in a descent upon Ireland in 1234. Sir William himself was outlawed in the following year, for murdering an Irish messenger, in London. Then followed what appears to have been a trumped-up charge against him of having conspired to assassinate Henry the Third. Threatened with the most serious consequences, William the younger then fled to Lundy, described as "impregnable from the nature of the place." The account of his doings then proceeds to tell how he "attached to himself many outlaws and malefactors, subsisted by piracies, taking more especially wine and provisions, and making frequent sudden descents on the adjacent lands, spoiling and injuring the realm by land and sea, and native as well as foreign merchants."

During four years the piracies of this desperate man continued. It does not, however, appear that he could do otherwise than rob upon the high seas, and really perhaps he deserves a little sympathy. Falsely accused of plotting to assassinate the king, he had of necessity to abscond, if he desired to save his life : and once upon Lundy, where no sufficient sustenance grew, he was further obliged to help himself from passing vessels. And having thus, from the mere instinct of self-preservation, become a fugitive and a pirate, he continued (impelled by the Moorish blood thought to run in the veins of his race) to follow the trade of buccaneer from sheer delight in it, and from merely helping himself to necessities, descended to

the enormity of seizing whatever he could. It all sounds like the downward career of a good young man, as read in religious tracts. First we see him, son of a turbulent father, with a heritage of bad blood. Then the mere peccadillo of killing a stray Irishman—an incident not worthy a moment's consideration—clouds his fair horizon. No one in those times would, in the ordinary course of things, have thought much of that ; but his father's wild career was doubtless remembered against him, and he was, as we have already seen, outlawed. The rest of his descent was easy ; and at last, in 1242, he was captured—how, we are not told—“ thrown into chains, and with sixteen accomplices condemned and sentenced to die. He was executed on Tower Hill, with especial ignominy,” his body gibbeted and divided up into small portions, in a manner which it scarce beseems these pages to narrate.

Then at last the island was for a time in the king's hands. But in 1281 Richard the Second re-granted it to a descendant, and Mariscos ruled for a while, until Edward the Second granted it to the elder of his Despenser favourites. The force and vigour of the once-fierce Marisco family appear to have been lacking in Herbert, their last known representative, for he seems not to have opposed the grant with any determination, and died in 1327 ; the year after the king himself, fleeing from the plots of his wife and Mortimer, despairingly considered for a time the project of hiding in this then almost inaccessible retreat.



THE LANDING-PLACE, LUNDY.

From that time onward, for a long period, whoever nominally possessed Lundy, foreign pirates actually occupied it, attracted by the prospect of rich plunder to be taken out of the ships sailing up or down Channel, to or from Bristol. On one occasion, in the time of Henry the Eighth, the men of Clovelly, greatly daring, fitted out an expedition and, attacking a company of French pirates on the isle, burnt their vessels, killed or made prisoners of them all, and thus freed the commerce of the Channel for a space.

Not for long, for in 1564 it was found necessary to direct Sir Peter Cary, "forasmuch as that cost of Devonshyre and Cornwall is by report much hanted with pyratts and Rovers," to make ready one or two ships, for the purpose of suppressing them. The economical policy of the government, as shown in these instructions, was to secure that those thus charged with clearing out this nest of robbers should be provided with ships and food only, and should find pay for their labour in whatever plunder they could seize: "They must take ther benefitt of y^e spoyle, and be provijded only by us of victell." Furthermore, with an even greater refinement of economy, it was suggested that "ye sayd Rovers might be entyced, with hope of our mercy, to apprehend some of the rest of ther company, which practise we have knowen doone good long agoo in the lyke."

These canny offers do not seem to have been eagerly responded to, for it became necessary, twenty-three years later, for the port of Barnstaple

to fit out an expedition of its own. The town records show this to have been successful, for items appear respecting food and drink for prisoners taken, and for the pay of watchmen guarding them.

But any isolated efforts resulted only in temporary relief. The position of Lundy, right in the track of ships well worth plunder, was too tempting, and pirates used it as a base until well on into the eighteenth century. Not only home-grown pirates, but foreigners, and not only foreigners, but strange remote people from distant climes used Lundy for their purposes. Thus in 1625 three Turkish vessels, manned by buccaneers, had the impudence to land on the isle, to carry off the inhabitants as slaves, and even to overawe Ilfracombe. Three years later French pirates made a home here, and seem to have been dislodged only with great trouble. In June 1860 it was declared that "Egypt was never more infested with caterpillars than the Channel with Biscayers. On the 23rd instant there came out of St. Sebastian twenty sail of sloops; some attempted to land on Lundy, but were repulsed by the inhabitants."

Sir Bernard Grenville, then owner of the isle, in 1633 recorded the appearance of a Spanish warship, which landed eighty men, who killed one Mark Pollard, bound the other inhabitants, and then, taking everything they could lay hands upon, departed.

And so forth, in many more incidents of violence and pillage. In the reign of William

and Mary, the French established a privateering base here, and snapped up many rich prizes out of Barnstaple and Bideford. Finally, in 1748, Thomas Benson, a native of Bideford and a landed proprietor in that neighbourhood, took a lease of Lundy from Lord Gower, and, contracting with the Government to export convicts to Virginia and the other New England states, landed them here instead. Among his other activities were the old industry of piracy and the almost equally ancient one of smuggling. He must have been a many-sided person, for he became in 1749 Member of Parliament for Barnstaple, where he was extremely popular; having, among other things, presented the corporation with a large silver punch-bowl. By some oversight, he forgot to add a ladle, and this being hinted to him, he furnished that also, with the inscription on it, "He that gave the Bowl gave the Ladle." Both remain cherished possessions of Barnstaple.

What with smuggling, breaking contracts, and finally scuttling a vessel he had heavily insured, Benson presently found himself in a bad way. Excise officers descended upon Lundy, and discovering a great accumulation of excisable articles hidden away in caves, he was fined £5,000. The vessel he had laden with pewter, linen, and salt, and over-insured, was bound for Maryland, but the most part of her freight was landed on Lundy, and the ship, putting out to sea again, was burnt by Lancey, the captain. The crew, who had a hand in it, were betrayed by

one of their own number, and Lancey and a selection of his ship's company shortly afterwards dangled from the gibbets of Execution Dock. Benson, author of the villainy, made away to Portugal, and in the end died there.

Somewhere about 1780, Lundy was purchased for £1,200 by Sir John Borlase Warren, who had the odd fancy of colonising it with Irish. Twenty-three years later, it commanded only £700. In 1834 it passed to Mr. William Heaven. The value was then £4,500. The present owner, the Reverend H. G. Heaven, became curate in 1864, and is now not only rector and proprietor, but absolute autocratic ruler of the isle. No person, except pilots, may without his permission go beyond the beach; but no instance has been recorded of the right being exercised and, in practice, exploring parties go where they please.

Two recent chapters in the history of Lundy afford interesting reading. The first is dramatic indeed, being nothing less than the wreck of the *Montagu*, first-class battleship, on the Shutter Rock, at the south-westerly extremity of the island, at ten minutes past two o'clock on the foggy morning of May 30th, 1906. The *Montagu* was one of a squadron executing manœuvres in the West. Coming up Channel, a dense fog shut down upon the scene and confused the reckoning of the ship's officers, who, thinking they were just off Hartland Point, shifted her course into the fatal proximity of Lundy. In this perilous uncertainty as to the exact situation of the ship,

when the captain should, by all the usages of the service, have been on deck, he was in his cabin ; and not only the captain, but also the navigating lieutenant was away from his post, the battleship being at the time in charge of a junior officer. Suddenly the *Montagu* ran on to the sharp pinnacles of the Shutter reef, and became immovable ;



THE "MONTAGU," ON THE SHUTTER ROCK.

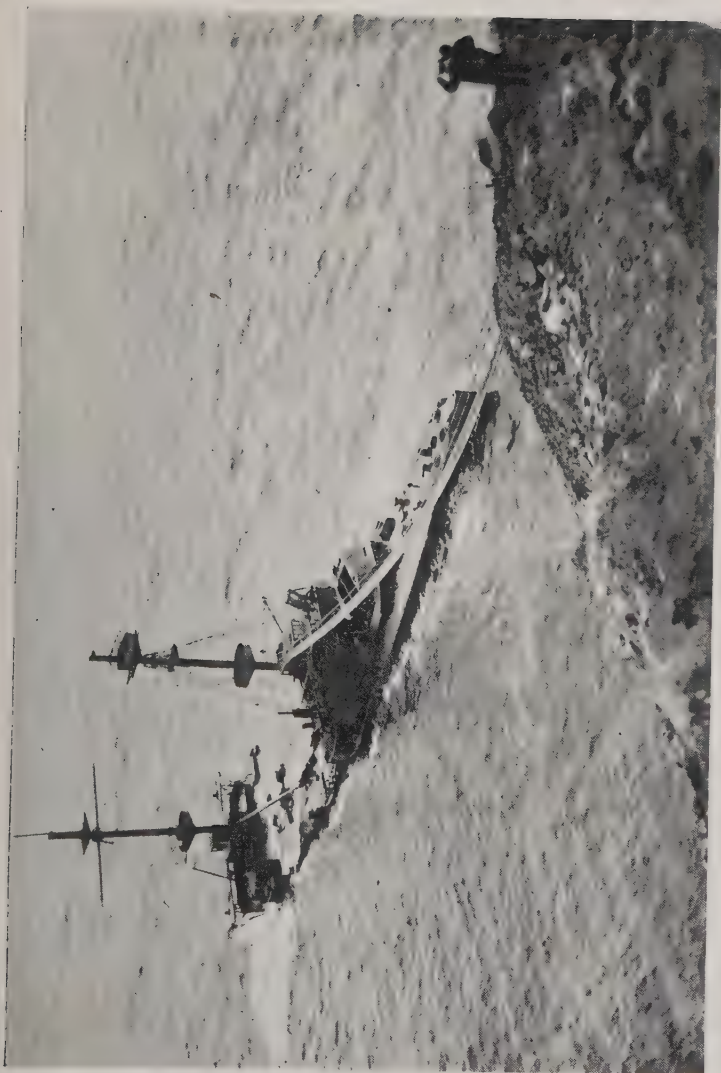
completely impaled upon the rocky spikes, which thrust right through the thick hull, and into the engine-room. Thus were the lives of 750 men imperilled, and a 14,000 ton ship, launched only so recently as 1903 and costing a million and a quarter of money, reduced to the value of old iron and steel. Captain Adair and his navigating lieutenant were court-martialled and retired from the service.

Fortunate it was for all on board that a heavy

sea was not running at the time, or all must have perished. As it happened, the *Montagu*, although filled with water, was so immovably fixed that there was little danger, and the crew, without much difficulty, scaled the cliffs.

The Admiralty at first endeavoured to lighten the ship by removing the heavy guns and other tackle. Sister ships stood by while this was done, and then "camels," *i.e.* steel tanks filled with compressed air, were attached to the sides, to raise her; but after months of work, it was found useless, and the ill-fated ship was at length sold to a salvage company for a ridiculously low sum. It is generally understood that the company, working with a large staff for twelve months in removing the armour-plating and other valuable parts, have made enormous profits. In spite of the winter storms that have raged here since then, the hull remains as firmly fixed as ever.

Not only the Salvage Company, but the excursion steamboats also, have benefited largely by that disastrous error of judgment on a foggy night, for, in the course of two summers, many thousands of people who might not otherwise have visited Lundy, have taken the trip to see the poor, rust-streaked wreck. They land upon the beach, and, toiling painfully up and over the rocky spine of the island, come to a grassy cliff's-edge. There, below, lies the *Montagu*, and up above they sit, perhaps a couple of hundred of people, gazing upon the reddened decks, awash with the waves, until prudence bids them hasten



World's Graphic Press.]

THE LAST OF THE "MONTAGU," AUGUST, 1907.

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back for the steamer's return. The owners of the excursion steamers are devoutly hoping the wreck may last another season. They are not like the wicked old wreckers of the Cornish coast, who often went so impiously far as to pray : " O Lord, send us a good wreck ! " but they perhaps hope that, if any more naval commanders are about to pile up their ships on the rocks, they may do it hereabouts, so that, at any rate, some honest folk may profit.

The year 1906 also witnessed the attempted sale of Lundy. It was offered by auction, at Tokenhouse Yard, on September 25th. The auctioneer was equal to the occasion. He enlarged upon the unique position of any one fortunate enough to become possessed of this " little kingdom for a little king, an empire for a little emperor." A very little emperor, be it said. He exclaimed : " no rates, no taxes, no motor-dust," and narrated how there was no licensing authority, and in short, complete freedom from the ills the harassed rate-payer of the unhappy mainland is heir to. How much for this desirable property ? Ten thousand pounds bid, for a rent-roll of £630 ? £10,500, and so on to £17,000 ; and thenceforward to £19,000. " Only £19,000 bid for this little, tight little (no, *not* tight little, for there are no public-houses), let us say ' bright ' little, island ? Why, there is a fortune waiting in the granite alone ; and a prospect of the Government some day making Lundy a naval base !

" All done at £19,000 ? Gentlemen, I am

sorry to say the reserve price of £25,000 has not been reached, and the lot is withdrawn."

And so Lundy up to date remains, as it has been, in the hoary jokes of over seventy years past, "the Kingdom of Heaven."

Mr. Heaven's residence stands near by the landing-place, and the venerable clergyman has long been a prominent figure, walking down to the beach occasionally, to gaze upon the people of the outer world, or to entrust some trustworthy-looking person with a letter to be posted; for in the official course it is only a weekly mail-service from Instow. The modern church of St. Helena, built at a cost of £6,500, was completed in 1897 and is capable of holding the entire population of Lundy, eight times over. Does any one expect active colonisation?

A new lighthouse looks down from Lamator upon the landing, and lights also the other side, where the disastrous Shutter Rock lies in wait for shipping. It is a famous rock, finding mention in "Westward Ho," as the scene of the wreck of the Spanish ship, *Santa Catherina*, when Amyas Leigh was baulked of his own personal revenge. It stands up, in pyramidal form, outside the gloomy cleft of the "Devil's Limekiln," some 370 feet deep. It is the "shutter" rock because of the popular belief that, if it could be placed in the "Limekiln," it would exactly fit. Outside rises Black Rock.

Near the older lighthouse are the ruins of St. Helen's chapel, with, beyond it, the heights of Beacon Hill. Continuing on the western side of

the island, we come to the old Signal Battery, whence guns were fired in misty weather, and so to Quarter Wall, built by Benson's convicts across the isle. A number of yawning cracks in the upland, sloping down to the sea, are observed on the way to Jenny's Cove. These are called "The Earthquakes."

"Punchbowl Valley," "The Devil's Chimney," and the "Cheeses," indicate the weathered masses of granite in the little bay. Beyond these the Halfway Wall goes across the island. Thenceforward, save for the myriads of sea-birds, the way is comparatively tame. Except for a little stream—a curiosity on Lundy—no striking scenery is met until the North Point and its modern lighthouse reached, where the cliffs end in piles of rocks, like ruins, and the Hen and Chickens islets are scattered about, off-shore. Here, on most days, the air is filled with the screaming of the thousands of aquatic birds that inhabit the crannies of the rocks. Puffins or "Lundy parrots," cormorants, guillemots, and gulls fly, or swim and dive, or sit in queer contemplative rows upon the reefs, like congregations at service. Occasionally a seal may be seen splashing off the seal rocks.

The very ground, sloping to the cliffs hereabouts, is honeycombed with the tunnels in which the puffins make their nests. The ruins of one of several ancient round towers, presumably old-time defences of the isle, are met with on turning the point and making for the curious pile of rocks

called the "Mousetrap." A track of marshy ground here diversifies the scene. Tibbet's Point rises 510 feet above the sea. Beyond it is the "Templar Rock," a cliff-profile singularly like the helmeted face of a man. At this eastern extremity of the Half-way Wall is a logan-stone that, owing to the decay of its support, no longer rocks to a vigorous push. The circuit of the island is completed on passing the deserted workings of the Lundy Granite Company and its empty cottages.

CHAPTER IX

CHAMBERCOMBE AND ITS "HAUNTED HOUSE"— BERRY NARBOR

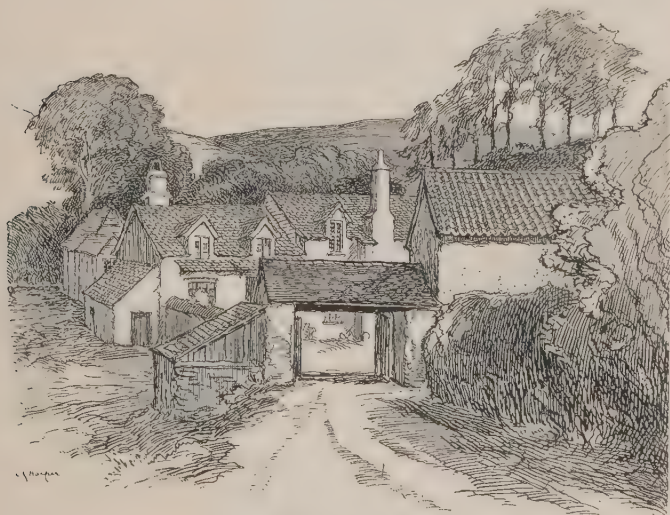
THE modern suburban extensions of 'Combe are devouring the rustic lanes far in the rear, and the natural wildness of Devonian landscape, that seems so untamable, is being pitifully bridled. New terraces of cheap houses climbing unimaginable steeps, deploy their battalions of "desirable residences" over the hills: each house with its pretentious name—"Hatfield," "Blenheim," "Burghley," maybe—their sponsors, without humour themselves, the cause of much satiric humour in others who chance by them. You must pass many such on the way to Chambercombe (originally Champernowne's Combe), one of the places no visitor to Ilfracombe is bidden to miss seeing; Chambercombe being a still rustic valley where there even yet nestles an ancient farmhouse, formerly a manor-house of a branch of the Champernowne family, and long enjoying a rather vague and ineffectual reputation as a "haunted house."

Suddenly, passing "Champernowne Terrace," the uttermost outpost of 'Combe, and a bankrupted mineral-water factory, you come to the opening of

Chambercombe ; a road steeply descending, hollow, rutty, with tall hedgerow elms—in a word, Devonian. Down at the bottom, the eye rests gratefully upon a steep-roofed old whitewashed building, enclosed within high and thick courtyard walls, and approached through a gateway : the old home of those North Devon Champernownes, extinct, equally with their South Devon namesakes of Modbury, long generations ago. For many years it has been a farmhouse, and in all this time its uncertain legendary fame has grown, so that now, by dint of its nearness to the town, and of the constant stream of curious visitors who plagued the very life out of the farming folk, the present occupants have taken Opportunity by both hands and exploit the legend to commercial ends ; as the notice, with a generous profusion of capital letters displayed at the gateway, discloses. Tea and refreshments may, you read, be obtained, and even lodgings had, at Chambercombe Farm, “ With its Haunted Room And Coat of Arms Shown To Visitors.”

It is the only instance in which this explorer has observed ghostly associations so thoroughly exploited ; but, truth to tell, they are of the vaguest. When a “ ghost story ” has many and diverse variants, you instinctively discredit every one, and here the versions are many. Most of them, also, are irreconcilable with the hard, uncompromising, indisputable facts of building construction. For example, the most popular variant, that which tells how, at some period un-

named, the farmer discovered by accident the "haunted room," is wildly wrong in describing the appearance the house now wears, and has always worn. According to this precious effort of a disordered imagination, the farmer was seated one summer evening in the courtyard, lazily smoking his pipe and thinking, with the typical



CHAMBERCOMBE.

farmer's usual dissatisfaction upon matters agricultural, while his wife was down at Ilfracombe (or rather, "down *tu'* Cume," as we say in these parts) selling her poultry, butter, and eggs. While thus occupied, he suddenly bethought him of a hole in the roof, through which the rain leaked into his wife's store-room. He had promised her he would see to it, and, as he went rather in fear

of his "missus," faced his chair round suddenly and contemplated seeing to the business before her return. Now the store-room window was the only one with a parapet in front, and therefore easily distinguishable from the other four that looked down from the roof on to the courtyard. But now (he had never before thought of counting them) he totted up five windows. This was odd ! He reckoned up : " Our Sal's bedroom—window lighting passage—store-room—our bedroom : total four windows accounted for. What unsuspected chamber did the fifth light ? He settled that by calling some half-dozen of his farm-hands. Together, with pick and spade, they entered the house and ascended the stairs, and commenced operations on the staircase wall, at a likely spot, where blows resounded hollow. Soon the cob wall went down before the onslaught, and presently the farmer and his men found themselves in a long, low room, hung with moth-eaten, mouldering tapestry, whose every thread exhaled the moist rank odour of forgotten years ; black festoons of ancient cob-webs in the rattling casement and round the carved work of the open cornice ; carved oak chairs, wardrobe, and round table, black too, and rickety, dust-covered, and worm-eaten ; the white ashes of a wood fire on a cracked hearth-stone, and a bed, whose embroidered hangings were drawn closely around the oaken posts."

The farmer's wife had by this time returned home, and was seen and heard in the choking dust, urging her astonished husband, " if he were a

man," to "dra' them cuttens." Thus impelled, he drew them—with a trembling hand, be sure of that—and there, resting on the bed, was disclosed an ancient skeleton. The woman fainted and her husband carried her out. That night he saw to it that the mysterious room was again securely walled up.

This is all very well, as an effort of the imagina-



THE "HAUNTED HOUSE" OF CHAMBERCOMBE

tion, but it does not, by any means, bear relation to the facts of the case. As the accompanying illustrations of the old farmhouse show, there is not, nor could there have been, a parapet, and there are but three windows in the roof. Moreover, the "Haunted Room"—so to style it—is really only an ancient hiding-hole (and a not very cleverly constructed hiding-hole either) at the head of the staircase; a dark and cramped

cranny without a window, and too small ever to have contained a bed. The next most popular story is to the effect that the skeleton of some unhappy foreigner, murdered in long past years by wreckers, was found here; but the two most plausible theories are that this was either a smugglers' store, or the hiding-place, in an era of religious persecution, of Roman Catholic recusants.

Near by, but not in any way connected with this hole, is the so-styled Banqueting Room, anciently the principal apartment, now a bedroom; with coved ceiling, a plaster pendant, and a band of plaster Renaissance ornament. The shield of arms of the Champernownes, a lion rampant within an engrailed bordure, is seen, carved in stone, over the fireplace. The lower rooms are stone-flagged, and in one of them they show you the corner where, according to legend, was the entrance to an underground passage leading to Hele Strand, a mile distant!—the usual preposterous legend. There was possibly a secret way into the valley at the back, just as there is a defensible gateway in the front; for just as the old lords of Chambercombe felt the necessity for defence, they also provided for stealthy retreat when defence should become at last hopeless.

Berrynarbor is one of those easily accessible places that no visitor to Ilfracombe who claims to have done his duty can afford to neglect. The village lies in a valley, three miles away, and, except for a long stretch of allotment gardens, making a streak of squalor on the hillside above,

is a very pretty place. Its church, more imposing than that of 'Combe itself, has been zealously stripped of much old carving; but the family pew of the Bassets of Watermouth, with its fireplace and comfortable seats, remains to show with what a degree of comfort the squires, at any rate, took their devotions.

Westcote, so long ago as 1630, recorded the curious epitaph on one Nicholas Harper, with its inevitable play upon the name :

Harper, the musique of thy life,
So sweet, so free from jarr or strife,
To crowne thy skill hath rayseed thee higher,
And placéd thee in angels' quier :
For though that death hath throwen thee down,
In Heaven thou hast thy harp and crowne.

In the chancel is a tablet to the memory of Mary Westcott, who died in 1648. Some curious verses compare her to a marigold :

This Mary-gold lo here doth shew
Marie worth gold lies neer below
Cut downe by death, the fair'st gilt flow'r
Flourish and fade doth in an hour.
The MARYGOLD in sunshine spread
(When cloudie) clos'd doth bow the head
This orient plant retains the guise
With splendid SOL to set and rise
Even so, this Virgin MARIE rose
In life soon nipt, in death fresh growes
With CHRIST her Lord shall rise againe
When shee shall shine more bright by farre
Than any twinkling radiant starre
For be assur'd that by death's dart
MARY enjoys the better part.

An anagram follows, in this wise :

MARIE WESTCOTT
Mors evicta tuta,

and the representation of a yellow marigold concludes the curious monument. Not the least curious part of it is the fact that these verses do not commemorate a girl who died untimely, but a spinster aged seventy.

The old farmhouse of Bowden, where Bishop Jewell, the apologist of the Anglican Church, was born in 1522, remains. His defence of the newly established church was at the time thought so admirable that it was directed by the Government of Queen Elizabeth to be chained in the parish churches of the kingdom.

CHAPTER X

LEE—MORTE POINT—MORTHOE AND THE TRACY
LEGEND — WOOLACOMBE — GEORGEHAM —
CROYDE — SAUNTON SANDS — BRAUNTON,
BRAUNTON BURROWS, AND LIGHTHOUSE

THE way out of Ilfracombe to Lee, for the pedestrian, is through the Tors Walks, and so by clearly defined cliff paths for two miles. The carriage road leads past Ilfracombe parish church, and, turning to the right, goes up hill to Slade. Finally, having climbed to an extravagant height, it plunges alarmingly down, and still down, steep and winding, through a luxuriant valley, where you encounter the hot steamy air, like entering a conservatory. Fuchsias in full-bloom take the place in the hedgerows generally occupied by privet, thorn, or blackberry-bramble, for this is the locally famed "Valley of Fuchsias," where frost comes rarely and the keenest winds are robbed of their sting. At the foot of this descent, the village of Lee is gradually disclosed; a graceful little Early English Church, built in 1836, the old Post Office, where visitors do most resort for tea, a few clusters of cottages, and then the sea, furiously rushing into a little rocky bay, or calmly lapping among the rocks, or retired at low tide,

leaving exposed a thick bed of seaweed that sends up a strong bracing scent ; all according to the mood and circumstances of the moment. A strikingly handsome hotel—the “Manor Hotel,” standing amid lawns and gardens, for it was once the manor-house—occupies the middle of the tiny bay, and is the resort of those who like to be within easy reach of Ilfracombe, and yet out of its exuberant life ; and that is all there is of Lee. The coastguard path clambers round to Bull Point lighthouse, and there is a steep and rocky, but hopeful-looking, lane on the left which promises a short cut for the stray cyclist to Morthoe. Appearances are deceptive, and, quite a long way up hill, the lane ends and the aggrieved stranger finds himself in an almost trackless succession of fields of oats. Negotiating these with what patience he may, and floundering through the fearsome mud of the two farmyards (Heaven send it be not wet weather !) of Warcombe and Damage Bartons, he comes at length to a road, which, to his dismay, he finds is a private road to Bull Point lighthouse. From it there is no exit towards Morthoe save through a formidable padlocked gate eight feet high, but a notice (on the outer side of the gate only, and therefore likely to be overlooked by the raging cyclist within) directs those who want to drive or ride to the lighthouse to call for the keys at a neighbouring cottage. As for the lighthouse, it is own brother to dozens of other modern structures of the kind, and was built in 1874. It was built especially to guard against the

dangers of Morte Point, and in addition to its occulting light has a lower fixed red beacon on the west, to mark the position of Morte Stone. A reef-strewn indentation, known as Rockham Bay, separates this spot from Morte Point.

Morte Point does not impress me, and although I have every wish to "write it up" to its grim name—as every journalist who properly understood what is expected of him would most assuredly do—I cannot see the grimness of it; only a projecting tongue of land that runs down to the sea and ends in low, insignificant cliffs, with a chaotic scatter of formless rocks projecting from the waves, and the "Morte Stone," rather larger than the others, seaward. And there are, you know, squalid little gardens of the allotment type in the fields, and Morthoe village itself is so commonplace that the tragical names, "Death Point," "The Hill of Death," seem absurdly misapplied. But Morte Point is a great deal more deadly than it looks, and although the landsman who sees with his own vision, rather than at second hand, may slight the name, seafaring men dread it more than the really magnificent spectacular bulk of Hartland Point. It is not the size, but the awkward situation, of Morte Point, together with the currents which set about it, that make it dangerous to shipping. The removal of Morte Point is, naturally enough, beyond the powers of man, but it should at any rate, in these days of high explosives and engineering skill, not be impossible to abolish the isolated rock of Morte

Stone, in spite of the ancient sardonic jest that the only person to remove it will be the man who can rule his wife.

Morthoe (locally "Morte") village is a wan, desolate-looking collection of a few houses on the cliff-top, overlooking the wide expanse of blue sea and yellow sands of Woolacombe Bay. It can never have worn anything but a stern, stark, weather-beaten appearance, but that is giving way in these times to something even less attractive; commonplace plaster-fronted houses, that would not pass muster in even one of the less desirable London suburbs, having sprung up around the ancient weatherworn church, while a grocer's shop, styling itself "stores," looks on to the churchyard. At a place named so tragically "Morthoe," you do most ardently demand that the scene be set somewhat in accordance with the ominous name. The stranger does not insist upon a mortuary full of shipwrecked sailors, as (so to say) a guarantee of good faith, but he does resent, most emphatically, the sheer commonplace that dashes his anticipations remorselessly to extinction.

The ancient family of Tracy, associated closely with Barnstaple, and with many another locality in North and Mid Devon, are mentioned in histories of the neighbourhood as early as the beginning of the twelfth century. Ever after the murder of Thomas à Becket in 1170, in which William de Tracy bore a part, the Tracys were said, in the wild legends of old, to have always "the wind in their faces." The belief provided

MORTHOE AND TRACY LEGEND 135

a rough rhyme, and satisfied a queer idea of retributive justice by which root and branch alike of that unfortunate family suffered for the acts of one who it appears was not himself, after all, of that race : having been a de Sudeley by birth, and only assuming the name of Tracy after his marriage with Grace, daughter of Sir William de Tracy. The legends that have gathered like the incrustation on old port-wine bottles, round the assassina-



MORTHOE.

tion of Becket and the after-history of the four knights who murdered him, tell how Tracy fled to Morthoe and passed the rest of his life in prayers and penitence, but it seems to be fully established that he fled the country and died three years later, in Calabria ; after having, according to a yet further variant, thrice unsuccessfully attempted to make pious pilgrimage to the Holy Land, and being beaten back on every occasion by adverse winds.

The legend associating the assassin with

Morthoe would appear to have been invented to account for the ancient altar-tomb, covered with an inscribed slab of black marble, bearing the name of one William de Tracy, that still stands in the south chapel of the old church. There was not, in the days when this tale originated, the disposition to criticise any story that imaginative persons might choose to tell. Research, for the purpose of recovering facts obscured by lapse of time, was unthinkable in the days when travel to the repositories of learning could be undertaken only at great risks and incredible cost ; and so, what with both the will and the power wanting to arrive at mere facts, many an incredible tale has been started on its career. It seems, in this instance, never to have occurred to the people of Morthoe, who long accepted this story, that among the numerous Tracys with whom they were in old times surrounded, there must have been more than one William. William, indeed, appears to have been a favourite name among them. In short, the man whose tomb remains here was a Tracy who from 1257 to 1322 was rector of Morthoe. He thus died close upon a hundred and fifty years later than Becket's assailant.

Remains of the incised figure of a priest are yet traceable on the tomb, together with an inscription which has been deciphered, " Syre Guillaume de Tracy, gist ici. Dieu de son alme eyt merci." The interior of the tomb was rifled long ago. In the quaint description by old Westcote, who wrote in 1620, " He rested in ease until some ill-affected

persons, seeking for treasure, but disappointed thereof, stole the leaden sheets he lay in, leaving him in danger to take cold."

This Early English church with aisleless nave and two chapels, has few other memorials, none of them ancient; but many of the old carved bench-ends remain, the balance of them being imitations, carved locally, when the church was restored in 1857. In recent years the east windows of chancel and north and south chapels have been filled with beautiful stained glass, designed by Henry Holiday, and the space above the chancel-arch decorated in gold and coloured mosaic, with four stiffly decorative angels in the Burne-Jones convention, by Selwyn Image. The dangers of Morthoe, not only to seafaring folk, but also to bathers, appear in the memorial window to Thomas Lee, architect, of Barnstaple, who was drowned off Barricane Beach in 1834. The memorial of a more recent tragedy is seen in the churchyard, where a tombstone records the drowning of "Winifred, youngest daughter of Sir Walter Forster, M.P., who was swept away by the treacherous ground-swell, while bathing in Coombes Gate, Morthoe, Aug. 14, 1898, aged 21." Near by is a rhymed epitaph upon one "Albion Bale Harris, aged 13," who was killed in 1886 by falling off a cliff at Ilfracombe.

The long, steep road that descends from Morthoe to the flat shore of Woolacombe Bay, is becoming plagued with a growth of tasteless lodging-houses, whose neutral-tinted stucco is put to shame by the splendour of sea, sky, and sands.

When last I came this way, two Italian piano organists, with a cage of canaries, were grinding out their mechanical music-mongery in an exceptionally lone spot, away from those new houses ; wasting, like the flowers in the wilderness, their sweetness on the desert air. None but the rocks heard them, for not another living soul was near. They were not drunk, neither did they appear to be mad. I have not yet discovered the true inwardness of it ; is it possible that here at last were two artists, for Art's sake, piano-organing for the very love of it? Dark doubts cloud the idyllic picture !

Below the road, before you come to Woolacombe Bay, is the little inlet of Barricane Beach, shut in between two projecting reefs. Charles Kingsley, many years ago, writing of Woolacombe Sands, referred to them as really composed of shells, but it would seem that Barricane Beach alone can claim his remarks :

“ Every gully and creek there among the rocks is yellow, but not with sand. Those are shells ; the sweepings of the ocean bed for miles around, piled there, millions upon millions, yards deep, in every stage of destruction. There they lie, grinding to dust, and every gale brings in fresh myriads from the inexhaustible sea-world. The brain grows dizzy and tired, as one's feet crunch over the endless variety of their forms—and then one recollects that every one of them has been a living thing—a whole history of birth, and growth, and propagation, and death.”

The little inlet, so shut in, has an exclusive air, in contrast with the open semicircular three-miles sweep of Woolacombe Sands ; but refreshment caterers have descended upon the place with tents. They have done the like at Woolacombe Bay itself, for in these days Woolacombe Bay is a name denoting more than an expanse of water with a sandy fringe. The safe bathing in the sea, and the extensive golfing on the sand hills or in the flat fields have converted what was, literally, a "howling waste"—for the winds occasionally blow great guns here—into the semblance of a seaside resort. There were, but a few years ago, only some three houses here, including the old manor mill, whose water-wheel formed a picturesque object beside the little stream that empties itself into the bay ; but now there is a great red brick hotel with the usual "special terms to golfers," and a little red town has sprung up around it, with a fringe of rather blear-eyed shops facing the sea, and some better, turned at right angles to it. There is so impossible a look about the whole thing, that "here we have no abiding place" is a quotation that rises promptly to the mind of the observer. It looks, with its refreshment booths and array of chairs on the shore in summer, like some camp-meeting in a desolate part of America. But it is intended to last ; a permanent water-supply has been installed and a kind of modern missionary tin church, dedicated to St. Sabinus, who voyaged across from Ireland a thousand years ago, to convert the

heathen of this neighbourhood—and was wrecked on this shore—has been erected. Woolacombe Bay, however, is a melancholy place. It has had no past, and it is difficult to imagine it with a future. Only a fanatical golfer to whom the world beyond his putting-greens and his bunkers is merely incidental, could long find occupation here.

That is a terrible road—preposterously steep, deep in loose sand, and strewn with large stones—which leads up from this resort in the making to the high table-land down on whose other side lies the village of Georgeham, whose inhabitants, quite exceptionally, insist upon it being styled, not “Georg’m,” but emphatically “Georgham.” That is their pronounciation, and they bid you use none other. In the fine, but rebuilt church, is the cross-legged effigy of an ancient St. Aubyn—one Sir Mauger of that ilk, who died in 1293—and an ugly and greatly-decayed monument of the Chichesters, with medallion-portraits of many seventeenth-century bearers of that name. In the churchyard, where the humbler sleep just as comfortably, is the epitaph of Simon Gould and his wife Julian, who died in 1817, after seventy-five years of married life, each aged 107, and near by may still be found a stone to one William Kidman, who, with all his mates, was drowned in the wreck of H.M.S. *Weazel*, guardship stationed off Appledore, at Baggy Point, in February 1799. An epitaph upon Sergeant Job Hill, of the 40th Foot, completes this list of interesting relics, on a martial note :

Nor cannon's roar nor rifle shot
Can wake him in this peaceful spot.
With faith in Christ and trust in God,
The sergeant sleeps beneath this clod.

Leafy lanes and rugged lead to the hamlet of Putsborough, very much removed from the snares and pitfalls of the world of affairs, and on the road to nowhere at all, unless it be the rocks of Baggy Point, which forms the southern horn of Morte Bay. Putsborough takes its name from some Saxon earl, just as Croyde derives its own from Crida ; and doubtless it was to convert the people of Putta and Crida, or their descendants, from the fierce heathen rites of the Saxons, that St. Sabinus, St. Brannock, and many another Irish missionary landed in the long ago on these shores.

Putsborough lies embedded in leafy seclusion. A farmstead or two, and their attendant cottages, together with a most delightful thatched manor-house, overhung with tall trees, comprise the whole place. The manor-house and its lawn and garden stand whimsically islanded by surrounding roads, and a little stream trickles by, in a water splash. It is a most primitive place and some of the lanes leading on to Croyde are fit fellows with it, being cut deeply into the rock and overhung, ten feet high, with brambly growths.

Croyde is not so entirely removed from social intercourse. It is still a pretty, scattered rustic village lining a road running down a valley to the sea, with a brawling stream beside the road ; but on the shore of Croyde Bay, where there are

yellow sands, some recent seaside houses have been built. It is a pretty and cheerful little bay ; not large enough to look melancholy and desolate, like that of Woolacombe, and the road on to Saunton is excellent ; having really been remade across Saunton Down, as part of a "development" scheme. Excellent, that is to say, from the point of view of a motorist, for it is broad and straight, and the surface is beyond reproach. But it is, it must be added, more than a trifle bald and uninteresting to those who do not regard roads as the nearer perfection the more closely they resemble a race-track.

Whether Saunton be "sand-town" or whether it was originally named "Saint tun,"—as, in some sort, a holy district—is still a vexed question ; and likely to remain undecided, for these shores are remarkable both for saints and sands. We have already told briefly how St. Sabine—or Suibine, as he was known in Ireland—landed in disorder on Woolacombe sands in the dim past. Here were chapels of Saint Sylvester, Saint Michael, and Saint Helen ; and here St. Brannock came ashore in A.D. 300, to convert the heathen, and incidentally to found the church called after him at what is now Braunton, in "Brannock's-town." More of him anon. But legends tell how he built his early church of timber cut in forests by the seashore, and dragged inland by harnessed stags. Where, it has been asked, did these forests stand ? No one knows where legend begins and fact ends ; but it is certain that underneath these

miles of blown sand, on to Braunton Burrows, and again at Northam Burrows and on to Westward Ho, there lie the remains of a prehistoric forest, overwhelmed by sea and sand, or in some ancient subsidence, many centuries ago.

There is no *town* at Saunton, and the mere fringe of houses beside the road is very new; this coast having been of old too dreary and inhospitable to afford a home for honest folk. Smugglers, wreckers, and such shy cattle, were among its scanty frequenters, and sometimes (the place being so lonely and secretive) refugees landed amid these wastes. Among them was the Duke of Ripperda, who landed one dark night in the beginning of October 1728, out of an Irish barque. He "had no one with him but the lady who had procured his deliverance, the corporal of the guard, and one servant." This fugitive had escaped from the castle of Segovia. He was entertained the night by one "Mr. Harris of Pickwell," and then went to Exeter. Thus the Duke of Ripperda, who is no national concern of ours, flits mysteriously across country to disappear again in foreign parts. It would puzzle a biographer to give him a domicile. Born a Dutchman, he seems to have been sent on a diplomatic mission to Madrid, and there to have renounced Holland and the Protestant religion and to have become a Spaniard and a Catholic. Philip the Fifth rewarded him with a dukedom. Eventually he is found in Morocco, as a Moorish subject of the deepest dye. At one period, we

are told, he became a Jew, but that is scarcely credible. At last, having been everything it was possible to be, he died in 1737.

Old rotting ribs of wrecked ships, protruding like fangs from the wet margin of the sands, tell their own tale of unexpected and disastrous land-falls on the lonely shore.

On the left hand of the road is still to be seen "Saunton Court," an old farmhouse mentioned with glowing description in Blackmore's "Maid of Sker," but the interest of the house in the novel is not reflected in the present circumstances of the place.

The road leads directly into Braunton; a large, sprawling village of cob-walled, white-washed cottages; a place that has, so far, not been affected in the slightest degree by modern change. What Braunton was a hundred years ago, it remains to-day. Risdon, in "Survey of Devon," 1630, says: "Brannockston, so named of St. Brannock, the king's son of Calabria, that lived in this vale, and 300 years after Christ began to preach His holy name in this desolate place, then overspread with brakes and woods; out of which desert, now named the Boroughs (to tell you some of the marvels of this man), he took harts, which meekly obeyed the yoke, and made them a plow to draw timber thence, to build a church. I forbear to speak of his cow, his staff, his oak, his well, and his servant Abel, all of which are lively represented in that church, than which you shall see few fairer." Brannock's cow is

really well worth speaking of ; for, after it had been killed and carved into joints, the pieces reunited at the word of the saint, and the animal, restored to life, began to quietly graze in the meadows, as though nothing had happened. That, at any rate, is the legend. A legend that demands faith of a character not quite so robust is that of the vision which led Brannock to build his church here. In a dream he was shown a sow and her litter, and directed to select the spot where next day he should find the sow. A carved boss in the roof of the church represents the pig and her family, and St. Brannock himself, with his cow, is carved boldly on one of the old bench-ends.

It is a remarkable church, inside and out ; with tower and lead-sheathed spire out of the perpendicular. Most of the old carved oak bench-ends, dated about 1500, remain, decorated with a large number of devices ; among them, not only St. Brannock and his cow, but a bishop with his crozier ; the head of St. John Baptist held up by the hair ; Judas's thirty pieces of silver, and Master John Schorne, the charlatan rector of North Marston, Buckinghamshire, late in the thirteenth century, who imposed upon the credulous folk of that age by pretending to have conjured the devil into a boot. To convince the most sceptical by ocular demonstration, he contrived a mechanical impish-looking figure, fastened on a spring at the bottom of a long boot, of the kind worn by hunting-men. When the spring was released, the imp would fly up to the edge of the

boot, in what was in those times, you know, a really terrifying manner. The good Master Schorne, however, had him well under control, and, as so powerful a devil-compeller, was naturally feared and respected. He was further revered as a certain exorciser of the ague. Schorne and

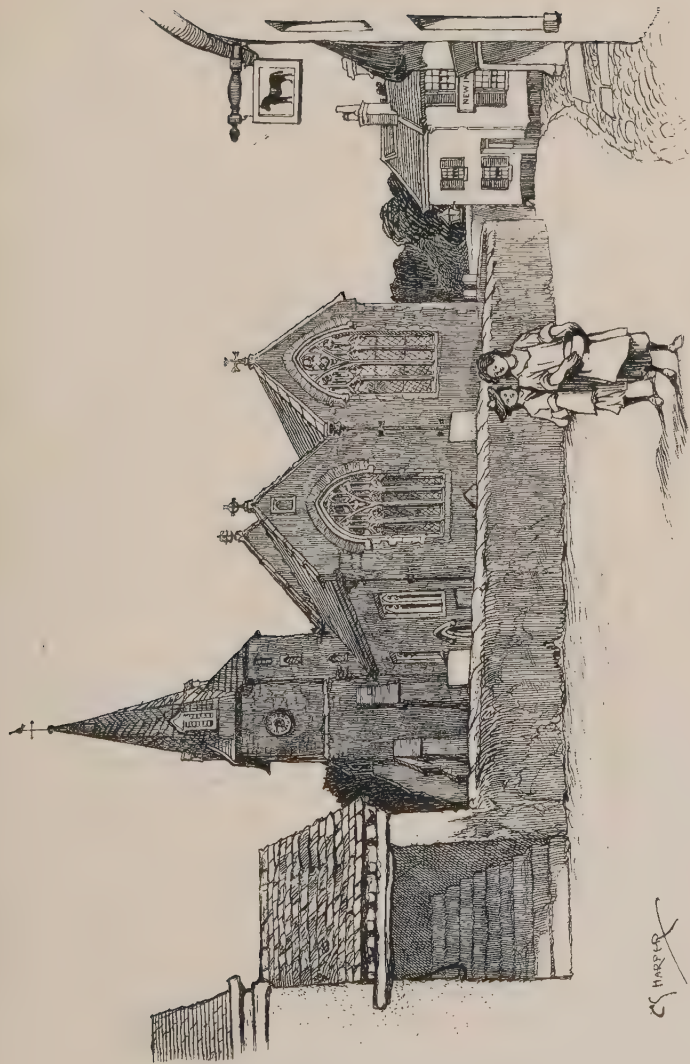


SIR JOHN SCHORNE
AND HIS DEVIL.

his devil in a boot are the originators of the children's toy, "Jack-in-the-Box"; for to that complexion did his supernatural terrors come at last, when the springs that actuated the jumping imp were laid bare.

But Schorne was in his day, and for long after, something very nearly like a saint, in popular estimation, and is indeed sometimes represented fully furnished with the saintly nimbus. Pictures, or carved effigies, of him are extremely rare, for there are probably not more than six or seven in England. Here, no doubt, through some confused version of the legend, the carver has shown him holding what appears to be a cup, instead of a boot.

Braunton church is full of old pieces of carved woodwork, notably the Jacobean gallery in the north chapel, and the churchwardens' pew, dated 1632. In the south chapel stands a richly decorated Spanish chest with undecipherable in-



BRAUNTON CHURCH.

scription ; and another relic of the wreck of H.M.S. *Weazel* in 1799, a tablet to the memory of William Gray, surgeon of the ship, one of the one hundred and six who lost their lives on that occasion.

A prominent church-like tower, standing on the crest of a tall hill east of the church, and by the site of a hilltop chapel of St. Michael, is less ecclesiastical than it looks, being in fact a political monument commemorating the passing of the Reform Bill in 1832.

Braunton Burrows are best explored by setting forth from Braunton village as for Barnstaple ; but, when some little distance out, turning to the right, over the Vellator railway crossing, and the little river, or creek, called the Caen. Thenceforward, the way is clear enough for those who are content to follow the creek to its junction with the estuary of the Taw, and so along the sands, past the ship that forms the port of Barnstaple hospital, to the lighthouse. But the true inwardness of the Burrows is only to be found by continuing straight on past the level crossing, and so into a lane that finally turns to the left and then loses itself in loose sand.

There is a world of desolation in Braunton Burrows, and he who would thus come, overland, to the queer lighthouse that is perched at the seaward end of the estuary of the river Taw, must needs quest doubtfully and with some physical discomfort, before reaching that point where the waste of shifting sand slopes down to the waves.

Just as no one becomes irreclaimably wicked in one plunge, but descends irretrievably by a series of slight moral lapses, so does the unwary traveller come by degrees into the baffling sand-wreaths of the Burrows. A good riverside road from Braunton village by degrees becomes an indifferent road; then, ceasing to be a road of any kind, becomes a more and more sandy lane, which, in its turn, insensibly degenerates to a track, and—



BRAUNTON BURROWS.

there you are! You must not, however, imagine this sandy waste to be without its own peculiar beauties, or barren of vegetation. The winds have blown the immense accumulation of shifting sand into fantastic hummocks and weird hollows, where the dry surface is ribbed by their eddies, just as the retreating tide ribs the wet sand of the shore; but here and there coarse grasses have taken root and achieved the seemingly impossible task of anchoring the elusive substance: crowning the ridges with a wan growth; and in some

sheltered hollows, where the wind comes scouring with less insistence, there are nurseries of pretty wild flowers which, although the unskilled explorer knows it not, are botanical treasures, some of them sought almost vainly elsewhere. Mats and patches of candytuft form exquisite carpetings, the wild pansy blooms abundantly, and in July, beautiful above all else, the intense blue of borage competes vigorously with the yellow-brown of the sand. It has been affirmed that eight hundred varieties of wild flowers are found here, including the rare *Asperugo procumbens* and *Teucrium scordium*; while near the quaint lighthouse the curious will discover the mud-rush (*Isolepis holoschænus*), and a bad smell.

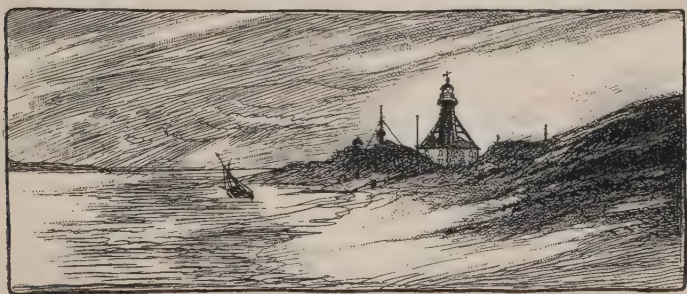
Near the lighthouse! There's the rub. To reach that goal is a matter of considerable difficulty; for, amid the labyrinth of hillocks and dales of sand, it cannot be seen afar off, and to come to it in anything like a straight course is, therefore, impossible. I know not which, among the inevitably uncomfortable and arduous circumstances of this enterprise, is the most distressing time. To wander here in rain, or in the bitter blast, must certainly be terrible; but no less terrible, in its own particular way, is it to explore this wilderness on some blazing hot day of August. The hollows are stifling, the sand everywhere soft and yielding, and in unexpected places lurk those "pockets," or holes filled with yet more yielding sand, that, equally with the rabbit-runs, give the place the name of "Burrows."

Into these unsuspected places you may easily sink suddenly up to the knee of one leg, while the other remains on the surface. This sandy waste is, therefore, not without its dangers.

The lighthouse that guides mariners safely into the Taw—or “Barnstaple River,” as sailors prefer to call it—is an odd structure; not so ferociously ugly as every writer who has mentioned it would lead the stranger to believe. It has character. No one, for instance, would be in the least likely to confuse it with any other lighthouse; and that is a great point. Nowadays, when the Trinity House builds a new lighthouse, it is as exactly like the last in general appearance as that was like its predecessor. Now Braunton lighthouse is a very old affair, that came into being when a considerable amount of individuality survived. It stands here, sturdily performing in its secular way what the neighbouring St. Ann’s Chapel did for sailors as a religious duty, long, long ago. Some few scanty remains of that little oratory and lighthouse combined were to be found, some years since, but they have now disappeared. The chapel measured fourteen feet six inches, by twelve feet. Neighbouring farmers requisitioned its stones so freely that what was left, even a century ago, was little more than a ground-plan.

The existing lighthouse looks like the design of some one who set out to build an ordinary, four-square dwelling, and then conceived the idea of placing a tower on its roof; and this tower,

tapering towards the lantern and carefully hung with slates, is strongly shored up with metal-sheathed timbers, lest the stormy winds that blow pretty constantly in winter overturn it. The lighthouse-man, who spends his summer days gasping for air on the shady side, holds the infrequent stranger in converse as long as possible, and does not appear altogether contented with his existence on a spot where, he says, you cannot bear to sit down on the sands in summer, for the



BRAUNTON LIGHTHOUSE.

heat, which is strong enough to almost scorch your breeks, to say nothing of your person, and in winter dare hardly put your nose out o' doors, on account of the cold. He will illustrate for you the especial dangers of this point, against which the lighthouse is placed here to guard, and will explain that, on account of the shifting, sandy bar of the river, there are two lights provided: the fixed one on his tower, and another, low down, on a movable white- and black-striped box on rails. This is moved backwards and forwards, according

to the movement of the bar, so that ships entering the river and keeping their course safely, shall get the two lights aligned.

The way between Braunton and the approach to Barnstaple, at Pilton, is uninteresting. The road runs for the most part out of sight of the river and the sea. Only one thing attracts the wayfarer's attention ; and that for its singularity, rather than for any intrinsic beauty. This object, beside the road, and so close to it that the wayfarer cannot fail to notice the queer, would-be Gothic battlements, is Heanton Court, now a farmhouse ; the " Narnton Court " of Blackmore's " Maid of Sker."

CHAPTER XI

PILTON — BARNSTAPLE BRIDGE — OLD COUNTRY
WAYS—BARUM—HISTORY AND COMMERCIAL
IMPORTANCE—OLD HOUSES—"SEVEN BRETH-
REN BANK"—FREMINGTON—INSTOW AND
THE LOVELY TORRIDGE

BARNSTAPLE is heralded by its suburb, Pilton, on a creek (or "pill" as the word is here) of the river Yeo. The people of Pilton, who were among the earliest to manufacture cotton fabrics in a district that made only woollens, were in the early part of the seventeenth century looked upon in much the same way as the makers of base coin are regarded. "Woe unto ye, Piltonians," exclaimed Westcote (1620), "who make cloth without wool!"

The churchyard of Pilton is entered in a singular manner, under an archway between almshouses. Here stood Pilton Priory, said to have been founded by Athelstan so early as the tenth century. Of that, however, there are no traces. The church, a very fine and interesting building, is largely Perpendicular. A curious and well-preserved grinning head with jester's cap forms a stop to one of the window hood-mouldings, and a tablet over the south porch, now somewhat

illegible, refers to "... late unhappy wars. ANNO DOM. 1646," and proceeds to record that it,



THE JESTER'S
HEAD.

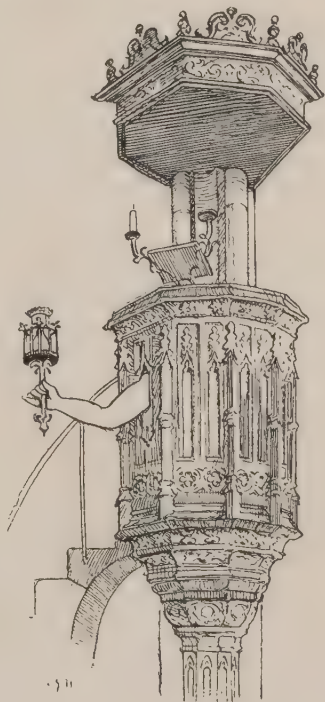
or the tower, was rebuilt in 1696. The church, in fact, was injured during the operations attending the various takings and retakings of Barnstaple by Roundheads and Royalists. A long metrical epitaph will be observed in the churchyard, to John Hayne, *d.* 1797, aged forty, huntsman and servant for twenty-five years to William Barber, of Fremington.

The interior of the church is very beautiful. A fine fourteenth-century oak screen divides nave and chancel, and the font is surmounted by a sixteenth-century canopy, said to have formerly been the canopy of the Prior of Pilton's chair. On one side is the staple to which the Bible was once chained. Among the relics in the church is an old pitch-pipe for the choir. But the most singular thing is the Jacobean hour-glass for the pulpit, held out by a projecting arm fashioned in sheet-iron and painted white. This fantastic object has acquired a very considerable celebrity in these days when every other tourist carries a photographic camera and hunts diligently for pictorial curiosities. The vicar and churchwardens of Pilton are also up-to-date, for they charge sixpence for the privilege of photographing the hour-glass and pulpit : and see they get it.

Barnstaple is built along the north bank of the Taw estuary, at a point where it suddenly

contracts, and where the river Yeo falls into it. In the tremendous language of the briefs sent out broadcast in the reign of Henry the Eighth, soliciting alms for the repair of Barnstaple bridge, crossing the estuary, the river is described as a "great, hugy, mighty perylous and dreadfull water, whereas salte water doth ebbe and flow foure tymes in the day and night." This was "piling on the agony" with a vengeance: a prodigious swashing about with sounding adjectives that seems to the modern traveller singularly overdone.

Barnstaple, it is quite evident by this appeal for aid, had not yet arrived upon the threshold of that era of abounding prosperity which was so soon to come. In a few years more the town was well able to maintain its bridge, but in the meanwhile had to beg through the land! It was a very old bridge, even then, and incorporated portions built so early as the thirteenth century. There were then thirteen arches, three being added



PULPIT AND HOUR-GLASS,
PILTON.

later ; but even so late as 1796 it remained so narrow that the roadway was scarcely practicable for wheeled traffic. It was, in short, little other than a pack-horse bridge in all those centuries. There was then no space left for foot-passengers when the pack-horses were crossing, and all such were fain to take refuge in the V-shaped sanctuaries that opened out on either side on the piers of the arches, and to wait there until the long, laden pack-horse trains had passed. But it must be recollected that the roads leading up to the bridge were of the like complexion and were roads only by courtesy. Wheels were out of place on them, too ; and pack-horses and that peculiar old Devonshire contrivance known as a " truckamuck " were almost the only ways of conveying goods. The truckamuck was just a rough cart without wheels, dragged by a horse along those uneven ways—a kind of larger and clumsier sleigh-like affair, combining the maximum of weight and friction with a minimum of convenience.

In 1796 the bridge was widened, and again in 1832, and it still remains a very composite structure. It is associated in old country lore with the exploit of Tom Faggus and his " strawberry horse."

Blackmore, in " Lorna Doone," laid hands upon the old Faggus legends, as upon many others, and worked them into his story ; but the redoubtable Tom was a real person, although more than a mere touch of the marvellous has been given

in folk-lore to his career ; so that he seems a creature compact of Dick Turpin and Robin Hood, in equal parts. He was a native of North Molton, and a blacksmith by trade. Ruined in a vindictive lawsuit brought against him by Sir Richard Bampfylde, he was obliged to leave his home, and then turned "gentleman robber." That odd description would appear in his case both to mean that he robbed gentlemen only and that his own status was that of a gentleman. It is a quaint rustic valuation, and seems to have been based upon the belief that he was a champion of the poor against the rich ; that he doubled, as it were, the parts of highwayman and relieving officer. His exploits long ago became, by dint of much oral repetition around the old cottage inglenooks, quite Homeric, and his enchanted "strawberry horse" figures as fiendishly intelligent, trampling the enemies of Faggus with hoofs and savaging them with teeth, like a devil incarnate. On one occasion Faggus was recognised in Barnstaple and pursued to the bridge, whereon he and his strawberry horse were cleverly caught by the watch posted at either end. But the highwayman was still more clever. He put his steed to the parapet, cleared it and swam off safely downstream.

Faggus was at last captured at Porlock and his famous horse shot ; himself finally being hanged at Taunton.

There will be no more Fagguses in North Devon and no more Doones ; for the conditions

that produced them are dead, and legends such as those that were told and retold of them around the farmhouse inglenooks on winter evenings—and that with every re-telling gained some fresh marvel—no longer form the entertainment of the farmers' men. All the rustics can read now: the maids burning the midnight candle over novel-ettes, the men addling their brains over the rag-bag weeklies, whose success with the million you perceive exemplified in the pioneer instance writ large at Lynton. So the old stories that were handed down from one generation to another have come to an end with the last surviving of the illiterates, and the only people who remember the simple folk songs are the occasional old men who may now and then be induced to sing them, in a quavering voice, for collectors of such things to write down before their final disappearance. Such a song was the following record of some feckless person, whose every bargain was a bad one, finally bringing disaster. Where and when it originated, who shall say? With slight variations, and with different choruses, the identical song is found in all parts of rustic England; a kind of rural classic:

“ My grandfather died, I can't tell ye how,
An' lef' me six oxen and likewise a plough;
I zold aff my oxen, and bought myzelf a cow.
Thinks I to myzelf, I shall have a dairy now.
I zold aff my cow, and bought myzelf a caaf.
Thinks I to myzelf, I have lost myzelf haaf.
I zold aff my caaf, an' bought myzelf a cat,
An' down in the carner the lill' thing did squat.

I zold aff my cat, an' bought myzelf a rat ;
With vire tu his taal, he barnt my old hat.
I zold aff my rat, an' bought myzelf a mouse,
An' with vire tu his taal, he barnt down my house."

Chorus :

" Whim-wham-jam-stram stram along, boys, down
along the room."

Barnstaple is in local speech, " Barum," after that fashion which makes Salisbury and Shrewsbury figure on the milestones round about as " Sarum " and " Salop." The name thus locally current has given a chance to those modern rhymesters whose activity bids fair to presently fit every place in the gazetteer with its more or less appropriate verse :

" There was a young lady of Barum,
Who said ' Oh ! bother skirts, I don't wear 'em.
In knickers it's easier
To walk in the breeze here
And, in climbing the cliffs, you don't tear 'em '."

It matters little, or nothing, that there are not any cliffs at Barnstaple, and that you would not seek at this precise spot for the most boisterous breezes.

The town is alike the oldest and the most important on this coast. Long before that usual starting point, the coming of the Normans, it figured prominently as Beardanstapol. Although it was once the site of a castle, and was for many centuries a walled town with defensible gates, its

inhabitants were essentially, from the beginning, a trading community, as the "staple" in the place name indicates. It was also one of the oldest Parliamentary boroughs, having sent representatives from 1295 until 1885, when ruthless redistribution, utterly without sentiment, merged it in a county division. Then the ancient local passion for bribery and corruption ceased automatically to be satisfied at intervals by competitive candidates for the honour of representing the "free and independent" burgesses, who greatly liked the free-handed and rejected with scant ceremony those who were not prepared to dive deeply into their pockets. Thus, when in 1865 Mr. Henry Hawkins, afterwards Lord Brampton, was invited to stand in the Liberal interest, the invitation was issued quite as much in the local interest and in the expectation that he would be as liberal with his money as in his political opinions. But the eagerly expectant people of Barnstaple received a nasty shock, for the rising barrister refused to spend a penny in bribery. The indignant electors, mindful of the glorious election of 1841, when £80 was paid for one vote, had their feelings outraged in the tenderest place, and rejected him with remarkable completeness.

From A.D. 928, when Athelstan is said to have conferred a charter upon the town, and 938, when he is supposed to have repaired the walls, already old and decayed, Barnstaple fully took advantage of its favourable situation in a sheltered estuary, and the port was large enough to be repre-

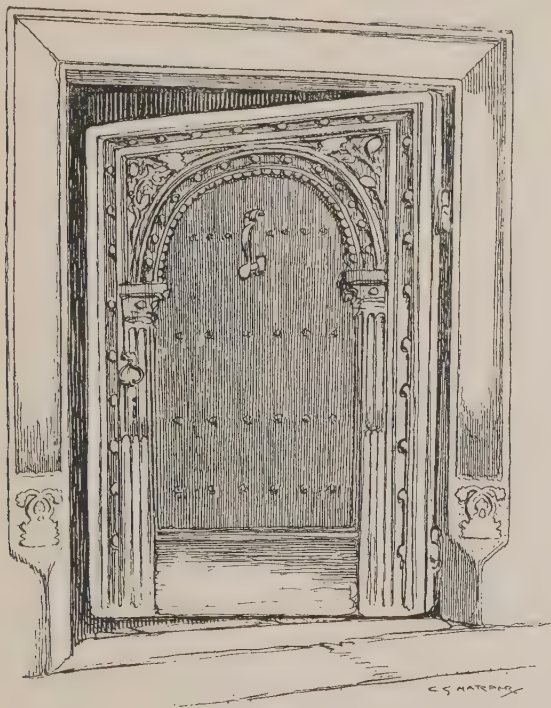
sented by ships at the siege of Calais in 1346. In 1588 it sent five ships to Liverpool's one, in the levy raised to combat the Spanish Armada; among them vessels with the proud, high-sounding names, *Tiger*, *God Save Her*, and *Galleon Dudley*. After thus serving their country, the Barnstaple merchants served themselves well, by equipping numerous privateers that successfully preyed upon the Spanish mercantile marine, and brought home to the old port on the Taw great store of treasure in gold, silver, and goods brought by Spanish sail from the Spanish main, and intended for Cadiz rather than for North Devon.

It was the Golden Age of Barnstaple. The burgesses manufactured woollen goods and baize and sold them in good markets, and the bold seamen sallied forth and patriotically scoured the ocean, and took by force of arms anything they liked. Sometimes they ran up against what a modern American would style a "tough proposition," in the form of an innocent-looking Spanish merchantman better armed and more courageously manned than they suspected, and the results were not so fortunate: but, naturally enough, records of these misfortunes are not given so prominent a place in the history of these things; and you are invited rather to picture the returned sea-captains, bursting with riches, carousing in the taverns of Boutport Street, and paying for their entertainment with moidores, doubloons, "pieces of eight" (whatever *they* were), and other outlandish coin. Coin of foreign mintage was more common than

the pieces of Queen Elizabeth (" God Save Her "), and passed current as readily.

To those times of unparalleled prosperity, which continued until well into the third quarter of the eighteenth century, belong many of those existing architectural remains of old Barnstaple that are becoming increasingly difficult to find in the rebuildings and other changes of our own times. Out of the abundance of his riches old Penrose in 1627 founded the almshouses that still remain very much as he left them ; and in that era the quays and Castle Street were occupied, not only with the warehouses, but the residences also, of the merchants who traded with distant countries or levied private war upon the foreigner, with equal readiness. A complete change has, indeed, come upon that quarter, for the Barnstaple Town railway station, a brewery, and some entirely modern houses stand upon the spot where the merchants did not disdain to live over their counting-houses, looking upon the river, where the weather-beaten vessels, at last come home from alien seas, were warped to shore. Of that old time there is a very fine old doorway left in Castle Street ; and in Cross Street, near by, over a tailor's shop, there is the first-floor front room of a late sixteenth-century house with a most elaborate Renaissance plaster ceiling and frieze, probably executed for some enriched merchant, fully conscious of what was due, in the way of display, to his wealth. The design is curious, the workmanship rough, the feeling of it imbued with a religious cast ; char-

acteristics, all of them, common to much work of the kind executed at that period in North Somerset and North Devon, from Minehead to Bideford. The Renaissance had come very slowly down this way, on its long journey from Italy, and had lost



AN OLD DOOR, BARNSTAPLE.

on the way the fine touch of its native land. It had lost also much of the somewhat pagan character it exhibited there, and became greatly concerned in the more prominent narratives of the Old Testament. Vague legends tell of wandering

Italian craftsmen executing the plaster ceilings and elaborate chimney-piece designs often found in old houses of the better class in these districts, but they were probably Englishmen, who had picked up something of the trick of the new style, without very much of foreign dexterity, but had imported their own thought into the work. At any rate the numerous examples met with have so striking a general likeness of treatment that the conclusion of their being the work of a distinct school becomes inevitable.

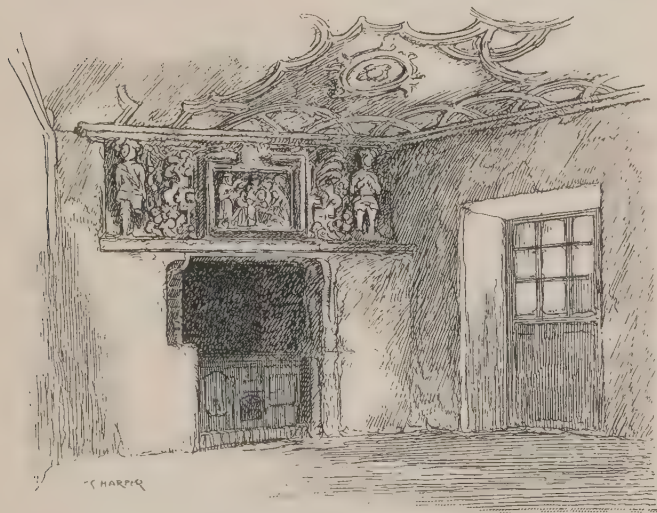
Here, in this Cross Street example, the subject is Adam and Eve ; Eve (with her arms ending in a trefoil instead of hands) about to pluck a very large apple off a very small tree, and Adam looking greatly alarmed. The Trevelyan Hotel has several decorated ceilings and a dark little back room—now merely a receptacle for lumber, and sadly injured—with a very elaborate chimney-piece in high relief, bearing a central medallion representing the Nativity, bordered by typical Renaissance scroll-work and flanked with two armour-clad figures, minus a limb or two each. The “Golden Lion” inn, however, has the finest display, to which, indeed, it has every right, the building having formerly been the town-house of the Bourchiers, Earls of Bath.

It is a fine old house, dating from early in the seventeenth century, with many oak-panelled rooms and passages, and several with ceilings intricately decorated in plaster reliefs. The large upstairs sitting-room is the gem of the house, dis-

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playing, as it does, a coved ceiling dated 1625, with pendants and the arms of the Bouchiers, together with scenes representing Adam and Eve, the Annunciation, the Nativity, and the Sacrifice of Esau, disposed at intervals amid a large mixed assemblage of horses, pheasants, and storks.

But most significant of all amid these signs of



OLD ROOM IN THE "TREVELYAN ARMS."

Barnstaple's prosperous old days, when all goods were sea-borne, and when its importance as capital of North Devon was impossible to be questioned by undue ease of communication with distant cities, is the curious old loggia, or covered way, known as "Queen Anne's Walk." Not Queen Anne, but the Barnstaple merchants, walked here, and it was really built in the reign of Charles the

Second. It was the merchants' Exchange, their Rialto, where all news was discussed, bargains made, and debts paid. All those uses are past and done with, but the curious flat-topped pedestal remains in front, on which those old traders paid their debts. Exactly such things are still to be seen, for example, outside the Exchange at Bristol. There they are called "nails"; and from them and this own brother to them derived the expression of paying for anything "on the nail." Now-



"QUEEN ANNE'S WALK."

adays the saying is a synonym for paying ready money, but it would no doubt be incorrect to deduce from it the lack of long credit in times of old. The only association this building has with Queen Anne is found in the statue of her, surmounting it, dated 1708, the gift of Robert Rolle of Stevenstone.

Barnstaple Friday market, held every week, is to this day an astonishing revelation to the stranger of the amount of business done in the great market buildings. On any other day he will find the town so quiet that the excellent shops and the many

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strikingly expensive new buildings seem to require some explanation. Friday, however, when every street is thronged, removes any such necessity. And the annual occasion of Barnstaple Fair, opened with some ceremony on September 19th by the Mayor, is still a great event in North Devon. On that momentous day the Mayor and Corporation regale a select company at lunch, after an old custom, with spiced ale and toast; and still the stuffed white glove, old-time symbol to debtors that they may adventure into the town during the continuance of the fair without fear of arrest, is displayed outside the Town Hall, although its significance is not now of much moment to either debtor or creditor.

In 1642 there burst upon the quiet Barnstaple folk, only too anxious to be let alone to manufacture woollens, and to import foreign wines, and so grow rich in trade, the great Civil War. The town was very comfortable then; still rich with the privateering of years before, but by force of circumstances, more respectable, for England had been for awhile at peace with Spain, and throat-cutting, treasure-grabbing expeditions, once patriotic, would then have been sheer piracy on the high seas. In this highly proper mood, and with their commercial instincts outraged by King Charles' illegal demands for Ship Money, and the like exactions, it is not surprising that Barnstaple people declared for the Parliament. But the vindictiveness with which they took that side is surprising. Not content to remain splendidly

defensive of their rights and their money-bags, they detailed a force to go and attack the small Royalist force holding Torrington. They were successful, and drove out 500 men, killed 10, took 40 prisoners and 200 stand of arms. The Royalists were further worsted at Sourton Down, on the borders of Dartmoor, but regained their position in the West at the battle of Stratton, where Sir Bevil Grenville most severely defeated



BARNSTAPLE CHURCH AND GRAMMAR SCHOOL.

the Roundheads, and subsequently demonstrating against Bideford, planted a Royalist garrison in a fort at Appledore commanding the sea approaches to Bideford and Barnstaple; with the looked-for result attending that last strategical disposition. Barnstaple surrendered, September 2nd, 1643, and the Royalists took possession. And here they remained, in fancied security, until the townsfolk revolted and retook possession. Appledore fort,

BARNSTAPLE PARISH CHURCH 171

however, held out, and within the month another force of King's men, marching upon Barum, again reduced it. The Royalist position here then became so secure, that the Prince of Wales (afterwards Charles the Second) was sent here for safety, with his tutor, and remained until July 1645, when it was thought safer, in the waning fortunes of the Royalists, to remove him further West. Meanwhile, the Parliamentary forces under Fairfax were coming, beating down Royalist resistance as they came. At length, in April 1646, they besieged Barum, and, nearly all else being lost to them in the West, the Royalists in five weeks finally laid down their arms.

Barnstaple old parish church is a great roomy building, its walls plentifully furnished with monuments of the old merchants. It stands in an alley known as Paternoster Row; its wooden, lead-sheathed spire, like that of Braunton, warped on one side, and in like manner. A plain white tablet on the exterior wall reads :

Beneath
lie the Remains of John Wheatly
a Native of Salisbury who died
an unprofitable Servant the
21 Day of September 1774 aged
82 Years

This hints mysteriously of a misspent life, but no one knows anything of the circumstances.

Almost adjoining the church stands what was formerly St. Anne's Chapel. At the Reformation, it became the Grammar School, and so remains. Between 1686 and 1761 it was also used, by permission of the Corporation, as a chapel, by the French Protestant refugees who had fled from the persecution of the Huguenots. A tablet facing Paternoster Row is to the memory of Thomas Lee, architect, drowned at Morthoe, 1834.

The River Taw is now bordered up-stream with leafy promenades, and by the Rock Park, another of the modern innovations upon the old order of things. To those who—seeing no rocks, but only smooth lawns and much landscape-gardening in the park—object that this pleasance belies its name, it is a sufficient reply to state that it was the gift of Mr. W. F. Rock, a native of Barum, and a member of the London firm of wholesale stationers, Rock Brothers.

And the river Taw runs past, over its broad bed of sand, or swirls fiercely up at the flood tide from the sea, bringing up seaweed and driftwood, and sometimes a fragment of wreck from the channel.

The wisdom of not retrieving all and every description of "wreck of the sea" seems to be pointed out by the sad seventeenth-century story of the four (not seven) brother fishermen who, fishing, after their daily custom, in the estuary of the Taw long ago, hauled ashore a bundle of rugs and bedding, floating up on the tide. It would appear that these articles had

been flung overboard from some ship afflicted with the plague, for the fishermen themselves died of it and were buried up river, off Tawstock, at a point still known, by an odd confusion of ideas, as “Seven Brethren Bank”; the spot having originally been marked by seven elms. A tombstone, long since vanished, was erected by Thomas and Agnes Ley, parents of the unhappy fishermen, with the inscription :

“To the memory of our four sweet sons, John, Joseph, Thomas, and Richard, who, immaturely taken from us altogether by Divine Providence, are Hear inter’d, the 17 August, Anno 1646.

“Good and great God, to Thee we do resigne
Our four dear sons, for they were duly Thine,
And, Lord, we were not worthy of the name
To be the sonnes of faithful Abrahame,
Had we not learnt for Thy just pleasure’ sake
To yield our all, as he his Isaack.
Reader, perhaps thou knewest this field, but ah !
'Tis now become another Macpelah.
What then ? This honour, it doth boast the more,
Never such seeds were sowne therein before,
W^{ch} shall revive, and Christ His angells warne
To beare with triumphe to the heavenly Barne.”

It was in the same year of this tragical trover that Barnstaple was stricken with the plague, probably by the agency of the same ship : a cargo of wool having then been landed at Bideford quays from the Levant. Bideford suffered first, and then Barnstaple.

A hilly road takes you up, out of Barnstaple, on the way to Bideford, out of sight of the river.

Past Bickington it goes, and Fremington—Fremington that was once a borough town and port, returning two members to Parliament in the reign of Edward the Third. Fremington finds mention in Blackmore's "Maid of Sker," where its creek is styled "Deadman's Pill"; but there is little, otherwise, to remark about it. Pretty, and overhung with trees where the road runs past the old church; but otherwise, no place to demand much attention. It is different with Instow, down the road, where the rivers Taw and Torridge join forces with the sea.

Instow is in two parts; the somewhat inland village and the water-side fringe of houses known as Instow Quay. The first of these two is old enough to find mention in Domesday Book, where it is called Johannestow; and from that to "Johnstow" and the present form was only the inevitable action of the centuries. The church gave it that name, having been dedicated to St. John Baptist.

The Quay, looking straight across to Appledore and out to the west, commands magnificent sunsets over the sea, with lovely views up the river Torridge and its heavily-wooded banks; the famous bridge of Bideford and the white houses of that town clearly to be seen, three miles away; or, lovelier still, and mysterious in the twilight—"the dimpsey," as they call it in North Devon.

The river Taw is fine, but the lovely Torridge is its much more beautiful sister. Those familiar with South Devon will readily find a remarkable

resemblance between the estuaries of the Exe and the Torridge, and in the upper reaches will not fail to note an equal likeness to the Teign, just below Newton Abbot. And, to clinch the resemblance, Instow Quay is not unlike Starcross, with the further similarity of a railway running by. Here is the same waterside line of houses, chiefly of the Regency and Early Victorian white-faced sort, just on the verge of becoming romantic, by mere effluxion of time. Little plaster-faced villas with green-painted verandahs and hairpin railings enclosing close-cropped hedges of privet or euonymus, approached by neat pebble-pitched pathways, sometimes, for greater effect of decoration, done in white pebbles, with a pattern of brown. I can imagine our great-grandmothers, as pretty girls of sweet seventeen, in book-muslin, taking holiday here and reading Jane Austen and Mrs. Gaskell.

Opposite lies Appledore, with the tall tower of what looks like a church on its scarred hillside, and is really a look-out tower known as "Chanter's Folly"; and sometimes you may see the grey mass of Lundy, on the horizon. Lonely Lundy, to which His Majesty's mails go only once weekly from Instow Quay, per sailing-skiff *Gannet*. For those who like tumbling on the ocean wave, the cruise there and back in the day on those weekly sailings is enjoyable; but for those who do not happen to be good sailors, the return fare of five shillings only admits to five shillings' worth of sheer misery. So Lundy generally remains to unsea-

worthy visitors to Instow a great unknown quantity.

The road runs close beside the estuary, all the way from Instow to Bideford, passing the nobly wooded hillsides of Tapeley Park, with its tall obelisk to the memory of one of the Cleveland family who fell at Inkerman. Bideford, on the opposite shore, becomes revealed, not only as a waterside town, but as very much of a hillside town as well, and with a not inconsiderable suburb on the hither side of the river : a suburb known as " East-the-Water." Here we come to the heart of that district of North Devon so intimately associated with Kingsley and his " Westward Ho ! " that it is very generally known as the " Kingsley Country."

CHAPTER XII

KINGSLEY AND "WESTWARD HO!"—BIDEFORD
BRIDGE—THE GRENVILLES—SIR RICHARD
GRENVILLE AND THE *REVENGE*—THE ARMADA
GUNS—BIDEFORD CHURCH—THE POSTMAN
POET

"THE little white town of Bideford," wrote Kingsley lovingly, "which slopes upward from its broad tide-river paved with yellow sands, and the many-arched old bridge where salmon wait for autumn floods." He wrote a part of "Westward Ho!" in the drawing-room of the "Royal Hotel" at East-the-Water, looking across to Bideford quay and the little white town that so strongly inspired him; and the room is styled the "Kingsley Room" at this day. The older part of the house was once the residence of one of those old merchant princes who flourished at many a port, centuries ago, and, amassing wealth swiftly in their overseas ventures, built houses for themselves befitting their dignity. At King's Lynn, at Poole, at Ipswich, and many another ancient port, the stately residences of those men, who risked much and often gained greatly, are still to be found; and often in the neighbouring churches you see their monuments

in brass or marble, picturing them in furred robes and linen ruffs, piously upon their knees, with hands devotionally placed, just as though they never had dabbled in piracy and privateering, as undoubtedly they often did.

The house that is now the "Royal" was built by one of these merchants in the year 1688. The noble oaken staircase and the elaborately decorated ceiling of the drawing-room survive to show us that he did not think the best obtainable too good for him. The moulded plaster ceiling, designed in festoons of fruit, flowers, and foliage in high relief, is one of the finest works of that local North Devon and Somerset school of decorative artists already referred to at length.

The "Royal," where Kingsley wrote, commands a view along the famous bridge of Bideford.

Never, surely, was other bridge so praised, sung, and celebrated, in all manner of ways, as this bridge of Bideford. The bridge *is* Bideford, to all intents ; and only the name of the town fails to reflect its glory. It has obstinately remained, in spite of that bridge, what it was before ever a bridge of any kind was thought possible to be built by hand of man—"By-the-Ford." For that, we are told, was the original name of Bideford ; or, in its full majesty, the real original name of the place was "Renton-by-the-Ford," which many-jointed and inconvenient title has only by degrees arrived at what it is now.

It was too late to change the name of the town when at last the bridge was set a-building, about



THE "KINGSLEY ROOM," ROYAL HOTEL, BIDEFORD.

1350 ; or else, be sure of it—so proud has Bideford ever been of its bridge—the change would have been made.

I hope no Devonian will think the worse of me for comparing Bideford Bridge with an old stocking. I merely wish to put in a picturesque way the fact that, although it has never been actually rebuilt, it has been so patched, re-cased, widened, re-widened, repaired, and otherwise amended, during some five centuries and a half, that, like a much-darned stocking, little is left of the original. Having thus deprecated hostile criticism, we will pass on to details. It has twenty-four pointed arches of various size, and spans the river in a total length of six hundred and seventy-seven feet. As to the original building of it, there are many legends, to take the place of facts lost in the mists of ages. According to these, there were angelic and demoniac contendants for and against ; and, indeed, in one way and another, the devil seems to have taken a great interest in old By-the-Ford. In the usually received version, it was " Sir " Richard Gourney, a priest (all priests were then " Sir " by courtesy), who first began the work, and an angel who in a vision laid the burden of it upon him. The bridge was to be built on that spot where he should find a great stone fixed in the ground.

Waking from this dream, he walked by the side of the river, where he had often walked before, and to his astonishment, saw a rock in mid-stream, where never, to his knowledge, had such a thing

lain. Straightway, convinced of the Divine origin of the vision, he narrated it to the Bishop of Exeter, and obtained from him the usual mediæval encouragement for all who might be prevailed upon to contribute to so excellent an enterprise. That is to say, he granted indulgences: liberty to do this and that, and a liberal discount off the usual term of Purgatory, which, in the Roman Catholic scheme of things in the hereafter, awaits the departed soul before it can enter Paradise. The pious, and even the wicked, who believed and trembled, and knew a bargain when they saw it, responded liberally, and so at last the thing was done. Not without let and hindrance from the devil, be sure of that! For “devil,” however, read quicksands, and we shall probably be nearer the mark; for the broad estuary was full of such, and they rendered building a work of infinite patience and resource. In the end, the bridge was built on patience and prayer, and—on sacks of wool! Now whether those who made the bridge did really get in the foundations of the piers on woolsacks thrown into the sand until they touched bottom (something after the manner in which Stephenson floated his railway across Chat Moss on faggots); or whether the story is merely a perversion of Bideford’s old and prosperous wool-trade having been taxed for the work—and thus, in a sense, the bridge being “built on woolsacks”—there are no means of saying.

In 1810, the bridge was found—like Barnstaple bridge, a few years earlier—too narrow for in-

creasing traffic. Wheeled conveyances were then replacing pack-horses, and it was necessary to double the road across. Fortunately, as in most bridges built in remote times, the sturdy piers were provided with cutwaters projecting far on either side, and on these the semicircular arches of the widening were turned. The cost of this, £3,200, seems in our own expensive age, singularly light ; and sure enough, a further widening in 1865, cost £6,000. Were it to do again, perhaps £14,000 would hardly suffice.

Of course, the bridge being so important a means of communication, it was not merely built by pious hands, but was liberally endowed as well ; and a chapel stood at the eastern end, on the furthest side from the town, at which few travellers who could afford an offering failed to give something. The bequests and the funds accumulated for its maintenance are now administered by a " Bridge Trust," which is a wealthy corporation, performing out of its handsome income of £1,000 a year, much good work for Bideford, in the way, not only of bridge repair, but extension of quays, schools, and the like. Also it gives, or rather gave, excellent dinners. The dinner-giving era is now only a fond memory, since the Charity Commissioners frowned down feasting at the expense of the trust funds.

All these various legends and functions led Charles Kingsley to write it down " an inspired bridge ; a soul-saving bridge ; an alms-giving bridge ; an educational bridge ; a sentient bridge ;

and last, but not least, a dinner-giving bridge." The bridge, he proceeds to say, "is a veritable esquire, bearing arms of its own (a ship and a bridge proper on a plain field), and owning lands and tenements in many parishes, with which the said miraculous bridge has, from time to time, founded charities, built schools, waged suits at law, and, finally, given yearly dinners, and kept for that purpose (luxurious and liquorish bridge that it is!), the best-stocked cellar of wine in all Devon."

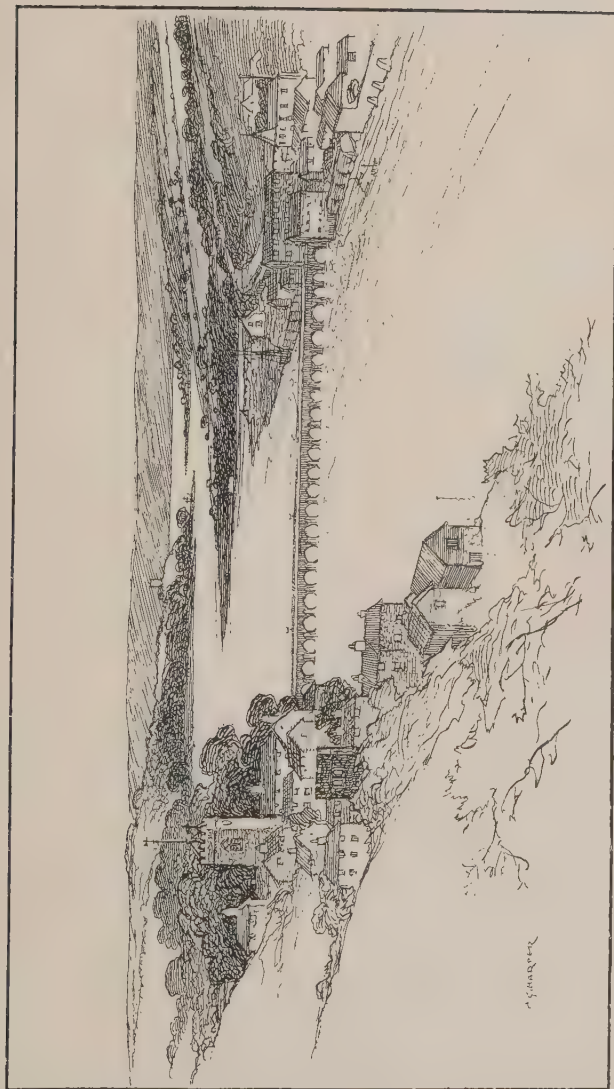
Weep, weep for the days that were, the days that are no more!

The rise of Bideford as a port in the reign of Queen Elizabeth was largely due to the Grenville family, then all-powerful in the neighbourhood. The town was incorporated at that time: the borough seal bearing date 1577. Shipbuilding then became a most important industry. But never at any time did Bideford approach the importance of Barnstaple.



SEAL OF BIDEFORD.

The Grenvilles, who bulked so largely here and in Cornwall, were of Norman ancestry, and their ancestor, who came over at the Conquest, called cousins with the Conqueror. They numbered a long line of gallant and distinguished men, which came to greatest distinction in the reigns of Elizabeth and Charles the First. Since that time they have split up into many distinct families, and even write their names in four different



BIDEFORD BRIDGE.

ways : Grenville, Granville, Grenfell, and Greenfield ; but, although branches have acquired peerages, none of the race has won to the fame attained by those who flourished in the long ago.

Intolerably proud, they at any rate had the driving-force of pride, which kept them at a high level of conduct and made them gallant gentlemen, who would have thought it shame to yield in fight, even though the odds were overwhelming. If a Grenville might not always conquer (for even to the brave victory is not assured), at least he might, and did, fight grimly to the end, as it was the tradition of his kind to do.

Two Grenvilles stand out prominently from that long line, for heroic valour. They were grandfather and grandson. The elder was that Sir Richard Grenville (or "Greynvile," as he wrote his name), who was Drake's right-hand man in the defeat of the Armada in 1588. Three years later, we find him, with his Admiral, Lord Thomas Howard, at Flores, off the Azores Islands, lying in wait for a number of Spanish treasure-ships due to pass that way. I do not think that enterprise was a very heroic errand, for Howard had sixteen ships, with a fighting force, and the treasure-laden galleons were ill-protected. I figure it on a par with a footpad with a bludgeon, lurking behind a hedge in wait for some plethoric old gentleman and his gold repeater. The result of an encounter, in both instances, would be a foregone conclusion. But, unhappily, Howard's force had not fallen in with those great treasure-laden

three-deckers before word came of a numerous and well-equipped squadron of Spanish fighting-ships on the way. It was a most unfortunate pass. Howard's ships were small and ill-found, and his men suffering from scurvy. They were re-fitting on the islands at the time, and hurriedly completed and stood out to sea, with the intention of evading the superior force, said to have numbered fifty-three vessels, and ten thousand men. This evasion may not sound heroic, but it was prudence, and Howard was an admiral who could have been counted upon to fight, had he seen a chance. Grenville, with his "intolerable pride and insatiable ambition," disobeyed the orders of his superior, and instead of evading the Spaniards, made, "with wilful rashness," as those who saw him wrote, to dash through their line, and cannonade them as he went. His little *Revenge* was, however, becalmed in their midst and surrounded, and there, against tremendous odds, was fought out that long fifteen hours' battle which inspired one of Tennyson's finest lyrics. The heroism of that long tragedy in which the *Revenge*, Grenville, and his crew of one hundred and fifty men bore their unflinching part has been made the subject of accumulated legends. The entire hostile force of fifty-three ships and ten thousand men is said to have been employed, but the facts seem to be that a large number of the Spanish vessels were supply ships, and that of the twenty ships of war they had, some fifteen, with five thousand men, were engaged in battering the English ship.

That is heroism sufficient, without needing exaggeration ; one against fifteen, to return shot for shot in a fifteen hours' battle. Tennyson, however, accepts the still more marvellous story :

“ He had only a hundred seamen to work the ship and to fight,
And he sailed away from Flores till the Spaniard came in sight,
With his huge sea-castles heaving upon the weather-bow.
' Shall we fight, or shall we fly ?
Good Sir Richard, let us know ;
For to fight is but to die !
There'll be little of us left by the time this sun be set.'
And Sir Richard said again, ' We be all good Englishmen ;
Let us bang these dogs of Seville, the children of the devil,
For I never turned my back on Don or devil yet.'

* * * * *

“ And the sun went down and the stars came out, far over the summer sea,
But never for a moment ceased the fight of the one and the fifty-three.
Ship after ship, the whole night long, those high-built galleons came,
Ship after ship, the whole night long, with her battle, thunder, and flame ;
Ship after ship, the whole night long, then back with her dead and her shame,
For some were sunk and many were shattered, and so could fight us no more—
God of battles, was ever a battle like this in the world before ? ”

The *Revenge* yielded only when, of all her men, there were left only twenty alive, and most of them grievously wounded, the ship herself a wreck, and

the ammunition expended. Such were the Elizabethans ! “ All the powder to the last barrell was now spent, all her pikes broken, the masts all beaten over board, all her tackle cut asunder, her upper worke altogether rased, and in effect euened shee was with the water, and but the verie foundation or bottom of a ship, pierced with eight hundred shot of great artillerie.” Grenville, himself mortally wounded, would have sunk the poor remains of his ship :

“ Sink me the ship, Master Gunner—sink her, split her in twain,
Fall into the hands of God, not into the hands of Spain ! ”

But the crew, brought to this pass entirely by Grenville's hot-headed bravery, rightly considered something was due to them. After all, a Spanish fighting man had also some sense of chivalry, and knew how to respect a brave enemy, conquered by superior force. So the *Revenge* was surrendered on honourable terms, and Grenville himself taken aboard the *San Pablo*, the Admiral's ship, to die, three days later, of his wounds. It was no craven surrender, and the battered *Revenge* almost immediately emphasised that, by sinking, with numbers of Spanish wounded aboard.

Grenville died with, as it were, a confession of patriotic faith. He spake it in the Spanish tongue, that all might hear : “ Here die I, Richard Grenville, with a joyful and quiet mind for that I have ended my life as a true soldier ought to do, that hath fought for his country,

queen, religion, and honour. Whereby my soul most joyfully departeth out of this body, and shall always leave behind it an everlasting fame of a valiant and true soldier, that hath done his duty as he was bound to do."

Sir Bevil Grenville, grandson of this hero, was born in 1596, and after upholding the King's standard with success in the West, and winning the Battle of Stratton, May 16th, 1643, was killed on July 5th, following, at the Battle of Lansdowne, on the heights above Bath. There are now no representatives of the Grenvilles left in the neighbourhood of Bideford.

They were not all loyalists in the West. We have seen the Puritan spirit, militant, at Barnstaple ; and Bideford stood out against the King's men ; the fort erected on the hill-top at East-the-Water by Major-General Chudleigh still remaining, and indeed restored, as a witness to historic times.

Other and much more interesting relics than those empty embrasures upon the sky-line are found in the eight Armada guns that lie in a row outside the Technical School, on the quay and in the neighbourhood of the Kingsley statue. Or, at any rate, they are reputed to be Armada guns ; which, with the sure fact that they are foreign, and the probability of their being Spanish, is as far as their story is likely to be told. In these parts they were so used to bring home captured ships, and to litter the quays with the spoils of other people, that the thing became commonplace and not worth recording at the time. And by that later

time, when the story of the relics got beyond recording, and no one really knew anything at all about them, they were all at once found to be curious and interesting—with the key to their story lost. They were then buried half their length in the quay and served the commonplace, if useful, purpose of posts, from which they have now been rescued. Long and slender, with long sloping shoulders, something in shape like exaggerated hock-bottles, they certainly resemble the indubitable Armada guns found on the wrecked ship at Tobermory in recent years. Nor are these all existing in the neighbourhood. There is one, astonishingly encrusted with long lying in the sea, thrown carelessly aside, opposite the Royal Hotel, Westward Ho!; two that formerly stood as posts on Instow quay are now at Tapeley Park, three are at Portledge, three others on the quay at Clovelly, and it is currently reported that several have been seen on the sea-bottom off Westward Ho! at exceptionally low tides.

Bideford Quay, that figures in circumstances of considerable stress in the great romance by Kingsley, is a very different place from the quay of Elizabethan days. A broad roadway runs now, where water and mudbanks once stood. Kingsley himself would scarce recognise it. Paradoxically enough, all these works and improvements have been undertaken since the commerce of the town has declined. There is no fierce energy at Bideford to-day, and such shipping as there remains is very casual. Some few old houses—older than they

look from without, remain by quayside; in especial, the "Three Tuns" inn, with a seventeenth-century plaster mantelpiece in an upstairs room, with figures in the costume of the time, clinging uncouthly to Renaissance ornament.

Bideford church is so closely surrounded by narrow lanes that it is not a remarkably conspicuous building. Except the tower, it is quite



BIDEFORD QUAY.

modern, the people of Bideford having in the eighteenth century been afflicted with that perversity for destroying Gothic buildings and rearing classic in their stead which desolated so many places. In its turn, the fantastic thing that is said to have resembled a lecture-hall, rather than a church, was demolished in 1865. A fine monument to Sir Thomas Graynfyld, 1514, stands on the south side of the chancel, and near by is a brass plate inscribed with the dying speech of Sir

Richard Grenville, at Flores. The register of 1591 describes him as "being in his lifetime the Spaniards' terror."

The monument of John Strange, merchant of Bideford, deserves notice, for he was no less brave a man. He died in 1646, the year the plague made such havoc here. It was the fourth year of his mayoralty. All others in authority had fled the infected place, but he remained to take care of the sick ; at last, when the scourge was abating, he took the infection and died.

What with civil war and with pestilence, Bideford had a stirring time of it. Licence was then the order of the day, and it was even possible for sour Puritans to defile the font in the church. Polwhele is not unduly severe in his remarks upon how it "was appropriated for the purposes of a trough for his swine to feed out of, by one schismatic. And if he had had his deserts, he would have made one of their company."

From the church, now, to the churchyard, and from the heroic to the eccentric, in the person of Henry Clark, who seems to have been both spendthrift and lazy, as judged by his epitaph, below :

A Tribute
To the Memory of
CAPTAIN HENRY CLARK
of this Town
Who departed this Life 28 April 1836
Aged 61 Years.

Our worthy *friend* who lies beneath this stone
Was Master of a vessel all his own,

Houses and Lands had He, and Gold in store :
He spent the whole, *and would if ten* times more.
For Twenty years he scarce slept in a *Bed* ;
Linhays and Limekilns lull'd his weary head,
Because he would not to the Poorhouse go,
For his proud Spirit would not let him to.

The Blackbird's whistling Notes at Break of Day
Used to awake him from his *Bed of Hay*.
Unto the Bridge and quay he then *Repair'd*
To see what *Shipping* up the River steer'd.

Oft in the week he used to *view* the Bay,
To see what *Ships* were coming in from sea.
To Captain's wives he brought the welcome News,
And to the Relatives of all their *crews*.

At last poor *Harry Clark* was taken ill,
And carried to the Workhouse 'gainst his Will ;
But being of this Mortal Life quite tired,
He liv'd about a month, and then expired.

Bideford has enjoyed a minor fame in more modern times as the home of Edward Capern, the "postman-poet." Capern was born at Tiverton in 1819. His father was a baker in that town, but removed two years later to Barnstaple. When eight years of age, the boy was sent to a lace-factory and made to toil long hours, until his health gave way. Injured in eyesight and in general health, outdoor occupation became necessary, and he at length found employment as rural postman, between Bideford and Buckland Brewer and district. It was a healthy occupation, but not an easy round—thirteen miles' walking, daily—and the pay, half-a-guinea a week, certainly was

not lavish. On his daily rounds he thought in rhyme. Himself said of himself :

“ He owns neither houses nor lands,
His wealth is a character good ;
A pair of industrious hands,
A drop of poetical blood.”

By subscription, in 1856, a volume of his verses was published, followed in 1858 by a second ; and in due course by two others, “ Wayside Warbles ” and “ The Devonshire Melodist,” the songs set to music also composed by him. A final volume appeared in 1881. None of these had much wider publicity than that of the friendly subscription-list. In 1866 he left Bideford and went to live at Harborne near Birmingham, but returned to Devonshire in 1884 and settled at Braunton. A Civil List pension of £40 a year which had been obtained for him was increased to £60, and on this his modest wants were sustained until his death in 1894. He was buried at Heanton Punchardon, near by, where his old-fashioned postman’s hand-bell is placed on his grave.

Capern was sometimes moved by the warlike memories of his neighbourhood, and wrote

“ Whene’er I tread old By-the-Ford
I conjure up the thought
’Twas here a Grenville trod
And here a Raleigh wrought.”

But most characteristically Devonian is the hymn to clotted cream, written in 1882, at Harborne, in reply to a present of some sent to him.

DEVONSHIRE CREAM

“ Sweeter than the odours borne on southern gales,
Comes the clotted nectar of my native vales—
Crimped and golden-crustèd, rich beyond compare,
Food on which a goddess evermore would fare.
Burns may praise his haggis, Horace sing of wine,
Hunt his Hybla-honey, which he deem’d divine,
But in the Elysiums of the poet’s dream
Where is the delicious without Devon-cream ?

“ Talk of peach or melon, quince or jargonel,
White-water, black-hamburg, or the muscatel,
Pippin or pomegranate, apricot or pine,
Greengages or strawberries, or your elder-wine !
Take them all, and welcome, yes, the whole, say I,
Ay ! and even junket, squab- and mazzard-pie,
Only let our lasses, like the morning, gleam
Joyous with their skimmers full of clouted cream.

“ What a lot of pictures crowd upon my sight
As I view the luscious feast of my delight !
Meadows fram’d in hawthorn, coppices in green,
Village-fanes on hill-tops crowning every scene,
Buttercups, and cattle clad in coats of red,
Flocks in daisy-pastures, couples newly wed
Happy in their homesteads by a flashing stream ;—
But what can be this golden, crimp’d, and bonny cream ?

“ Quintessence of sunshine, gorse, and broomy lea,
Privet and carnation, violet and pea,
Meadowsweet and primrose, honeysuckle, briar,
Lily, mint, and jasmine, stock, and gilly-spire,
Woodruff, rose, and clover, clematis and lime,
Myrtle and magnolia, daffodil and thyme
Is our pearl of dainties—and, to end my theme,
Nature’s choice confection is old Devon’s cream.”

Two things in the above, perhaps require explanation; "squab- and mazzard-pie." Squab-pie is a Devonshire dish composed of mutton, onions, apples, etc., and mazzards are a kind of wild cherry growing in North Devon.

The original manuscript of these verses hangs in a frame in the Bideford Public Library, where there is also a fine oil-painting of Capern in middle life, by the elder Widgery. For the rest, the library contains little enough, being one of those pretentious Carnegie buildings practically without books; an absurdity on a par with a showy restaurant that should provide only the cruets for the hungry to dine upon.

A vast amount of astonished comment has been penned upon the strange thing that a post-man should write poetry, but surely it is not so remarkable a thing to find a cultivated mind in the body of a letter-carrier! Culture, it would seem, is held to be the prerogative of the wealthy and the leisured. How dreadful, if it really were so!

CHAPTER XIII

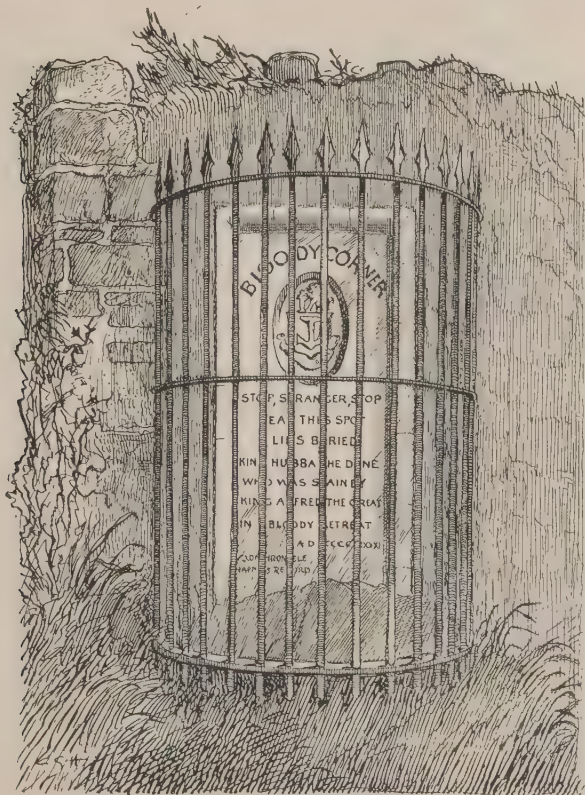
THE KINGSLEY STATUE—NORTHAM—"BLOODY
CORNER"—APPLEDORE—WESTWARD HO! AND
THE PEBBLE RIDGE

THE traveller setting out by road from Bideford to Appledore has a haunting feeling that he is making for some unconsidered part of the world: a loose end ravelling out to ineffectiveness. The map will help him in this impression, for it shows a tongue of land that is to all intents a dead end, leading nowhere. Nor will the railway journey to Westward Ho!, now made possible by the Bideford and Westward Ho! Railway—an undertaking which belongs to the "light railway" order—help him to revise this opinion. You may see the terminus of it on Bideford quay. There the rails run on to the roadway, and end without the formalities of a station, platforms, signals, or anything of the kind. And the weird-looking engine when it goes off, dragging the one or two carriages after it, glides away with the air of to-morrow being plenty of time to do the work of to-day. The road keeps well out of sight of the river Torridge, and is both hilly and uninteresting, coming at last to Northam. This is the very heart

of what has been styled the "Kingsley Country," rich in the scenes of his "Westward Ho!", and it is therefore of peculiar appropriateness that a white marble statue of him should have been erected in 1906 on Bideford quay, whence this expedition starts. It is an aggressive-looking Kingsley—and therefore true to the appearance of the original—that stands there in clerical robes, with quill pen poised in hand, ready, as in life, with more honesty than discretion, to do battle for any cause he had at heart. "The most generous-minded man I ever knew," said Maurice of him: with the fervour of a schoolboy and qualities of heart better than those of head, as the unfortunate controversy with Newman, in which that crafty dialectician had the better of him in argument, sufficiently proved. But although worsted in sheer tactical marshalling of his forces, Kingsley was instinctively right, and the sympathy of honest men went with him, and continues.

Northam is a dusty, gritty village, standing on a ridge that looks one way towards the Torridge, and the other across to the great waste of Northam Burrows, that repeat, on this side of the twin Taw and Torridge estuaries, the features of Brauntou Burrows. On the north side of the churchyard is a knoll, known as "Bone Hill," where a flagstaff has been planted on a cairn of sixty boulders, brought by willing hands from the famed Pebble Ridge. The whole thing forms a home-made loyal and patriotic memorial of the second Jubilee of Queen Victoria, with additions suggested

by later events, together with an aspiration that “these shores may never be without brave and pious mariners, who will count their lives as worthless in the cause of their country, their



“BLOODY CORNER.”

Bible, and their Queen.” But other people beside the mariners must do their part also.

There is little deserving notice in the neighbouring church, except the quaint inscription on

the interior wall of the north aisle : " This yeke was made anno 1593." Let us, then, press on to Appledore, passing Bloody Corner, so-called by reason of the defeat of the Danes here in A.D. 882 by King Alfred the Great, when the Danish chieftain, Hubba, was numbered among the slain. Hubba's Stone, where the landing of the invaders was effected, lies near the shore of the estuary. A recently erected memorial by the wayside marks the Corner, and a row of even more recently erected cheap cottages, opposite, serves effectually to dilute any feelings of romance.

Appledore (whose name has really nothing to do with apples, but derives from two words meaning " water-pool ") stands at the very entrance to the Torridge estuary. On the opposite side is Instow.

Appledore is a decayed port ; a fishing village long past its prime. Time was when its ship-owners waxed rich in what the natives still call the " Noofunlan' Trade," but that was long ago, and it is scarce possible even the hoariest inhabitant recollects those times. But the buildings, the quays are reminiscent ; the whole place mumbles, quite plainly in the imaginative ear, " Has Been."

This is, however, by no means to hint that Appledore is poor, or moribund. Vessels are repaired in its docks, a quarry is in full blast on the hillside, and the fishermen fare out to sea in pursuit of the salmon and cod. The less adventurous gather the edible seaweed known to

epicures as "laver," or at low water ravish the tenacious cockle and mussel from their lairs.

But, in general, Appledore has resignedly stood still since the "Noofunlan'" trade ceased, and remains very much what it was at the time of its ceasing: only something the worse for wear. Bideford may exchange cobbles for macadam, and even, in choice spots, wood-pavement, but Appledore's lanes, which are of the dirtiest, the steepest and most rugged description, still retain their ancient knobbly character. In short Appledore is a curiosity, and one not in any immediate likelihood of being reformed out of that status, for it is at the very end of things. So its white-washed cottages will long, no doubt, continue to give a specious and illusory character for cleanliness to it, as seen across the river from Instow; and "Factory Ope," "Drang," and other queerly named lanes will survive for generations yet to come.

Returning to Northam on the way to Westward Ho! I meet with a sad disillusion: nothing less than a group of angelic-looking little girls belying their looks by shouting ribald things, of which no one, and least of all Charles Kingsley, could find it possible to approve. And this in the "Kingsley Country," too!

Westward Ho! is all too soon disclosed to the disillusioned eye. You see it, as you come along the ridge road, occupying the flat lands and the sandy wastes beside the sea, with the famed Pebble Ridge extending towards the Burrows.

The scene is a beautiful display of colour: the dark-blue sea, light-blue sky, yellow sands, blue-grey line of pebbles and green salt-marshes, with the Branton lighthouse a dab of white on a distant shore.

But *Westward Ho!* is chiefly a sad collection of forlorn houses, dressed in penitential grey plaster. Kingsley wrote a romantic novel compact of patriotic fervour, love of Devon, of England, and of Elizabethan seafaring derring-do. He placed one of the most dramatic of his scenes—the interrupted duel—here, on “Bideford Sands.” You recollect the incident: Grenville intervening between the combatants, and his “Hold! Mr. Cary,” a fine moment; but it is Failure, not Romance that here meets the eye to-day.

The fame of the novel, “*Westward Ho!*” brought thousands of pilgrims into these parts, and aroused great enthusiasm. At that time these sands were lonely in the extreme. Not a single house stood upon them. But the astonishing success of that book led to the spot being “discovered” and duly exploited. Enterprising persons, finding that Bideford town was, after all, not a seaside resort, conceived the idea of founding a place which, with its sea-bathing advantages, should become in time as popular as, say, Weston-super-Mare. But they forget the fact—an enormous factor in the fortunes of such places—that, being on the way to nowhither, there was no railway here, and that there, consequently, never could be, by any chance, an easy and convenient approach from any large

town whence holiday-makers come. Thus forgetful "Westward Ho!" was founded. A hotel designed on a scale large enough for the considerable town expected to develop was the first care, but the place has never prospered, and failure is everywhere insistent. Three-fourths of the houses are empty and the others are chiefly occupied by people who wonder why they ever came—and wish they hadn't. These are those who by some cruel fate of necessity—choice or pleasure are surely out of the question—are anchored here.

But no thought of this fate crossed the minds of those projectors. They saw a brilliant future awaiting Westward Ho! and impressed others with their confidence. A "Kingsley Memorial College" was built, and a "United Services College" followed. Both are now closed and add their own note of melancholy to the otherwise sufficiently dismal place.

The United Services College was founded in 1874 by the exertions of General Sir H. C. B. Daubeney and a number of officers of the services. The idea was to provide a public-school education for the children of officers in Army, Navy, and Civil Services, at a lower cost than usual. "Fear God and honour the King" was its motto, and mural and naval crowns, surmounting crossed swords and anchor, were its badges. Mr. Rudyard Kipling was educated here, and the College therefore figures in that story of peculiarly nasty schoolboys, "Stalky & Co."

The "Pebble Ridge" is a good deal better to look at than to walk on. Conceive a raised beach, flung up out of the sea in the course of countless seasons, and forming, as it were, a natural embankment, fashioned by the waves against their own encroachment upon the salt-marshes. But do not imagine a ridge of pebbles like those that rattle up and down to the scour of the tides at Brighton. Those are like the stones found in gravel; but what is in North Devon conceived to be a pebble is a monstrous thing, rather larger than a dinner-plate, and weighing anything from five to seven pounds. In the times before the wretched settlement of Westward Ho! arose, and when the rustics still talked broad Devon, these were "popples."

CHAPTER XIV

ABBOTSHAM—"WOOLSERY"—BUCK'S MILL

A STEEP road leads up out of Bideford on the way to Clovelly, and goes, quite shy of the sea, and altogether out of sight of it, all the way. It is a quite unremarkable road. Here and there, subsidiary roads lead off to the right, giving access to entirely unsuspected habitations of men, lying variously from a quarter to half a mile distant on the seashore, or neighbouring it. First comes the village of Abbotsham, in its pretty valley, with a small church, chiefly remarkable for a little unpretending monument, dated 1639, to one Anthony Honey. He died aged nineteen; and some one, who loved him much, wrote the following epitaph upon him, in which humour and sorrowing affection peep out, really most plainly to be seen, you know, like the mingled sunshine and showers of an April day :

*Hoc parvo in tumulo situs est
Antonius Hony. Melleus ille suo nomine,
more fuit. Obiit June 1639, ætati, suæ 19.*

"His manners were as sweet as his name"; it is a pretty fancy.

Another bye-road leads down to the old mansion of Portledge, seat of the Coffin family, who

rather intensified the gruesome suggestions of their name by adding that of Pine to it. The Pine-Coffins have been seated here for generations. Half a mile along the cliffs, Peppercombe is found ; a few cottages seated in a hollow.

The main road passes at intervals, Fairy Cross, Horns Cross, and the Hoops Inn, and presently comes to Buck's Cross ; where one of many sign-posts continues a long series of pointing arms to "Woolsery." I have successfully resisted that repeated invitation inland, and do not know what Woolsery is like : only this, that the village of Woolfardisworthy is indicated. But even in North Devon, where time goes something slowly, life is not long enough to always pronounce the word as spelt of old, and certainly the arm of no sign-post is long enough to contain the whole of it ; and so the district has cast away, like so much useless lumber, half its length.

Down on the right hand goes the road, staggeringly steep, to Buck's Mill, a little cranny in the towering wooded cliffs, where a huge limekiln and a few white cottages hang crazily over the water.

Turner has made a pretty picture of "Bucks," as it is called for short—or more properly, "Bucksh"—with a distant glimpse of the houses of Clovelly, pouring like a cataract down the face of the cliffs, and a still more distant peep of Lundy. The old, old tale of the original inhabitants of Buck's Mill having been wrecked Spaniards is still told. You hear that story of many seaside hamlets in the West ; but I, for one, fail to see

the swarthiness, the obvious foreign origin, of the present men, women, and children of Bucks, so dwelt upon in guide-books.

When I found myself down at the bottom of that profound descent and at Buck's Mill, it began to rain: the hopeless dogged rain that comes down out of a leaden sky, deliberately, as though it were determined to rain all night. I sat in a leaky shed on a heap of sand and waited. . . .

Still waiting! Some one has written, somewhere, that ignorance is the parent of wonder, and all this while I had been wondering many things—wondering if it were going to rain all night; wondering if it were not better to push on to Clovelly; wondering if one would get very wet if a start were made now; wondering why it should be a law of Nature that hopeless rain should set in when one was in an exposed situation and with a considerable distance yet to go. . . . Better chance it.

And so, pushing the bicycle up that long, steep ascent, which in descending had seemed only a quarter the length, I slithered through a sea of mud along the lonely road and in a dense white fog. It had ceased raining, on the way, but the fog exuded almost as much moisture.

And so, cautiously, from Clovelly Cross down to the Court and the head of that precipitous staircase called Clovelly "street." The promised lingering approach, as the sun went down by the famed Hobby Drive, had to be abandoned for the while, and reserved for a more favourable day.

CHAPTER XV

CLOVELLY—"UP ALONG" AND "DOWN ALONG"
—THE "NEW INN"—APPRECIATIVE AMERI-
CANS—THE QUAY POOL—THE HERRING
FISHERY

CLOVELLY has been thought by some to have a Roman origin, and its name to derive from *Clausā Vallis*. The ingenuity of this derivation compels our admiring attention, even if it does not win our agreement. Ptolemy styled Hartland Point the "Point of Hercules," and Barnstaple is thought to have been the Roman *Artavia*; but no evidence of any kind associates Clovelly with those times. The great triple-ditched prehistoric earth-works at Clovelly Cross, where the road down to the village branches from the highway, point to some ancient people having been settled here and greatly concerned to defend the place; but the history of Clovelly Dykes, or "Ditchens," as they are called, will never be written. Clovelly's name almost certainly derives from words meaning "the cliff place," the site of it being amazingly cloven down the face of the steep cliffs that on either hand present a bold front to the sea. The force that carved out this astonishing cleft was the same

that has fashioned the many combes and "mouths" along this coast; an impetuous stream rushing from the inland heights. Indeed, the cobble-



CLOVELLY, FROM THE HOBBY DRIVE.

stoned stairs that form the footpath of Clovelly's "street," descending hundreds of feet to the beach, now represent what remained until modern times the bed of that streamlet. It poured down

here from the cliff-top, and the curious overhanging terraces of the "New Inn," and most of the cottages are survivals of its banks. This stream was diverted half a mile to the east, and now flows through the Hobby Drive and over the face of the cliff at Freshwater Cascade.

The population of Clovelly is almost entirely seafaring : or rather, the men are fisherfolk, and the men's wives have for years past found a second string to the domestic bow in letting bedrooms and providing refreshments for visitors ; so that when circumstances forbid the chase of the herring there is not likely to be that empty cupboard at home, which is apt to vex the lives and haunt the imaginations of the fisherfolk of most other seashoard places. What competition there is in this ministering to visitors is necessarily very limited, because Clovelly itself is unexpanding. What it was sixty or seventy years ago, that it remains in almost every detail to-day. It is the manorial appanage of Clovelly Court, standing up in its broad Park on the cliff-top ; and has been since the earliest times. In Domesday we find it the property, among innumerable other manors, of Queen Matilda, wife of William the Conqueror. Down the centuries occur the names of Giffards, Stantons, and Mandevilles, as owners ; and in the reign of Richard the Second it became the property of Sir John Cary, by purchase.

The oldest part of the church is Norman, but of those older lords of Clovelly no record survives. They are as though they had never existed. Sir

Walter Robert Cary is the oldest represented here, on a brass dated 1540. Other Carys survive in epitaph : William, who died in 1652, aged 76, who (it is claimed for him) not only served "three Princes, Queen Elizabeth, King James, and King Charles I.," but his generation as well ; and Sir "Robert Cary, Kt. (Sonne and Heyre of William), gentleman of the Privy Chamber vnto King Charles II., who, having served faithfully the glorious Prince, Charles I., in the long civil warr against his Rebellious subjects, and both him and his sonne as Justice of the Peace, died a Bachelor, in the 65th yeare of his age, An. Dom. 1675. *Peritura perituris relique.*" And so at last to the Williams family and the Hamlyns.

In the days of those older lords, when the country was thinly populated, travel a penance, and the delights of the picturesque unthought of, Clovelly of course did not grow ; and in our own times, now that beauty of situation is an asset and distinctly a factor in the value of land, and projectors of railways and hotels are currently reported to have eyes upon desirable sites, the Hamlyns have resisted all offers. So Clovelly will probably long remain unspoiled.

It has two inns, the old "New Inn," up-along, as we say here, and the "Red Lion," "down tu kaay"—*not*, please, "down upon the key," after the style and pronounciation of the outer world. If one could conceive such a fantastic thing in Clovelly as a street directory, it would consist almost wholly of those features, "Up-

along," "Down-along," North Hill, and Quay. "The New Inn and Hotel," as it now styles itself, does so with some show of reason, for the original "New Inn"—*when* it was new I cannot conceive—still stands upon one side of the road, and a really new building has been erected opposite: the "Hotel" referred to in the new style, without doubt. There, in the larger rooms of modern ideas, guests breakfast, lunch, or dine, and those unfortunate ones who cannot be accommodated with a bedroom in the old house across the way, sleep. Unfortunate, I say, because at Clovelly one wants to fare after the old style. For years familiar (as thousands of people who have never been to Clovelly must be) with the well-known view of the street showing the "New Inn" and the quaint little soldier and sailor mannikins that serve as windmills on its projecting sign, had I cherished a resolution to stay in the old hostelry; and it had now at last come to pass. Up narrow, twisting stairs was my bedroom, looking out, through clusters of roses, upon the street; and being thus gratified in the main object, it was a small matter that I breakfasted and dined in the new building across the way.

I shall say nothing of the fare of the "New Inn," except that it is of the best a typically Devonian farm could produce, and what better would you or could you, than that? Both houses, old and new—the old, with its snug little old-fashioned bar-parlour, as tiny and as full of corners and cupboards as a ship's cabin, and the

new, with its large dining-room—are full to overflowing with the most amazing collection of china, old brass candlesticks, kettles, pestles and mortars, and all sorts of old-fashioned domestic



"UP-ALONG," CLOVELLY.

utensils, accumulated in the course of many years at auction or private sales. You sit down to table in that dining-room as though you were dining in a china-shop. Some of the china is old and valuable, and a good deal is neither the one nor

the other. By the odd decoration of the ceiling, representing the British "Union Jack" and the U. S. "Old Glory" in amity, you might suspect—if you did not already know it by the accents of fellow-guests—that the bulk of those who seek the hospitality of the "New Inn" are citizens of the United States; but that is no reason why a Briton should be guilty of such abject sentiments as those inscribed between the two flags—not "something proud and vain," as the foremost modern novelist of the servants'-hall might say, but something mean and cringing, to the effect that it is hoped the United States will always remain friendly and not attack the Mother Country. To how many citizens of the United States is England the Mother Country? This is an age when Americans of British descent are in a minority among a huge population of cosmopolitan European immigrants, largely consisting of Russian and German Jews, Hungarians, and Italians. The people of Clovelly, it may be supposed, naturally seeing only those of British descent, are ignorant of that fact. And, as for being the object of attack, if that happened, could we not hold our own?

Meanwhile, the citizens of that Republic who find their way here are delightful, inasmuch as they themselves are so frankly delighted. England is such a new experience to most of them, and, whether it be a New England schoolmarm from Pottsville, or a pork-packing multi-millionaire from Chicago, you can clearly see that he and she

are as pleased as children. Some of them, too, are naïvely ignorant of quite the most commonplace things. It was on North Hill, and an old fisherman was talking to me and hoeing his garden the while. A very charming girl came along and, looking over the garden wall, said, in the American language, "My! what curious flowers those are. What are they?"

"Them's tetties, miss," replied the old man.

She looked puzzled. "Potatoes," I translated.

And so they were; potatoes in flower. And it was from America that Raleigh introduced the vegetable, over three hundred years ago!

Those transatlantic cousins in summer pervade Clovelly. Everywhere you hear it to be "purrfectly lovely," or "real ullegant," or may catch some one "allowing" it to be "vurry pretty," or even a "cunning little place." Sometimes they rhapsodise; and when they write down their names in the "New Inn" visitors' book, they write much else in the appreciative sort. I wish my own countrymen were in general as appreciative of the good things in scenery and antiquities as the generality of our American visitors—and yet, on second thoughts, I don't; because we who do love them would be lost in the sudden overwhelming swirl of humanity, and the things delightful would be finally spoiled, beyond recall.

To examine an accumulated pile of those books is to note that at least three-quarters of those who stay here are Americans. "If it were not for them," they say at the inn in particular, and in

the village in general, "we could not go on." A traveller from the United States, with his women-kind, is generally in a hurry, but if he visits Clovelly at all, he is, at any rate, almost certain to stay overnight. Often he comes with a motor-car, left at the stables far above. English holiday-makers, on the other hand, are most largely made up of steamboat excursionists, come for an hour



SIGN OF THE "NEW INN," CLOVELLY.

or two. You may see them landing in row-boats, and coming straggling up-along, gazing in wonderment this way and that, and then going off again, quite content with this hurried impression. Not theirs the wish to know what Clovelly is like in early morning, or to witness daylight fade away in that unique street, and the lights of the cottages

come out, above and below. I need not add that they certainly do not know Clovelly with a full knowledge.

Of those who record their stay in the visitors' book at the "New Inn," a large proportion add remarks, and some even indite verse. It is not great verse, as witness the following :

CLOVELLY

" A heaven on earth,
A haven for the weary,
Where Nature's glory hath no dearth,
Where life may not be dreary."

A caustic comment upon this by a later traveller shows that not even Clovelly may please all tastes. " My life "—so carps the abandoned wretch—" would be very dreary if I staid here long."

The soldier and sailor who occupy the projecting signpost of the " New Inn," and whose arms, revolving in the breeze like windmills, are finished off like cricket-bats, have been there just a hundred years, as you may perhaps see from their costumes. They are now held together chiefly by dint of many successive coats of paint.

Beneath, coming up or going down, clatter the donkeys with their laden crooks—the last survivals of the pack-horse era—for wheels are unknown at Clovelly, and whether it be luggage, or coals, or sand, or vegetables to be conveyed, it is some patient, sure-footed " Neddy " that does the carrying, on his long-suffering back. On the way they brush past the

artists, who are generally to be found calmly seated at their easels in the middle of the thoroughfare ; for artists are privileged persons here, and so plentiful that no one takes the least notice of them, and no curiosity is ever shown as to whether they be painting well or ill. And every visitor who is not an artist, has a photographic camera of sorts ; so that, in one way



A CLOVELLY DONKEY.

or another, a good many incorrect representations of Clovelly are taken away in the course of the year.

Halfway down to the sea, between this steeply descending line of white houses—every one of them old, except that modern annexe of the “ New Inn ”—is the sharp turn where a breast-high rough stone wall, commanding views over the sea,

is known as "the Look Out." Immediately below, the road runs under one of the old houses, called "Temple Bar," and thereafter goes zigzagging "down tu Kaay."



"TEMPLE BAR."

The Quay and the Quay pool compose the most miniature of harbours : the quay itself being a small but massive masonry pier, with a lower walk, an upper walk, and a breast-wall, curving out from a narrow strand. At high tide the water

off this pier looks so deep, and the waves rage with such fury, that it is with something the effect of a dramatic revelation you find the ebb capable of receding so far as to leave pier and pool alike quite dry, and the boats all canted at absurd helpless angles.

Over this little scene, the tall, sheer, tree-fringed



THE QUAY, CLOVELLY.

cliff of Gallantry Bower protrudes a sheltering shoulder ; the smoke from Clovelly chimneys on still days ascending perpendicularly against its dark green background, with a comforting, cosy sense of snug homesteads, sufficient though humble. The "Red Lion" stands prominently here, an odd building with something of a Swiss suggestion, and a tunnel through its heavy mass leading to a cobble-stoned courtyard, where you see an up-

turned boat or two, a scatter of domestic fowls searching for grains, and making shift with seaweed ; and perhaps one of those patient, all-enduring little Clovelly donkeys, submitting to be



BACK OF THE "RED LION," CLOVELLY.

loaded up with a heavy sack by a burly fisherman, who looks distinctly the better able of the two to hump the burden.

Along the wall of the "Red Lion," facing the pool, runs a bench, full in the sun, and there the fishermen of Clovelly sit. They sit there so long

and so often that they have little conversation : their pipes and the mere supporting presence of each other appearing to be quite satisfying. We may not believe altogether in the alleged Roman origin of Clovelly, but I saw a fisherman, one of the company on this bench, whose clean-shaven face was the very counterpart of Julius Cæsar's.

Clovelly fishermen are famed for their endurance and Clovelly herrings for their flavour. All through the West the fame of these herrings has gone forth. Yarmouth and Lowestoft may measure the catch of herring by the "last." Clovelly reckons so many "maise." A "maise" is 612, and is arrived at as follows : three herrings make one "cast," *i.e.* a handful : fifty cast, with an odd cast thrown in, equal the Scriptural "miraculous draught," and make one maund, and four maunds equal 612 fish = a "maise."

Buildings—not merely the old limekiln that looks like a defensible blockhouse, but dwelling-houses also—come down to the very margin of "Kaay pule" : in particular the strangely picturesque cottage, with balcony perilously strutted out from its walls, known as "Crazy Kate's," or rather "Craazy Kaate." The fishermen affect a supreme ignorance and indifference about "Crazy Kate." If you ask them, they will look enquiry at one another—and will know nothing as to the name, which appears on every one of those picture-postcards that are sold, literally, by the ton every season. It is an odd discourtesy ; the fact being that every one in Clovelly is perfectly well ac-

quainted with the legend which tells how one Kate Lyall, who lived here many years ago, lost her sweetheart and went "maazed"—as we say in the West.

The "Hobby Drive" is one of the most charming features of Clovelly. It is a two and a half miles' cliff drive, branching off from the main road at a lodge-gate, where one pays fourpence for the privilege of traversing that glorious winding-way turning and twisting back upon itself at hairpin corners, in negotiating the contours of the cliffs. It was a "hobby" of its constructor, hence the name. From this fern-bordered tree-shaded drive are obtained the finest peeps of Clovelly, down there hundreds of feet below: a toy port, an artist's dream, a—in fact anything rather than the reality it seems, so dainty and exquisite is the view.

CHAPTER XVI

MOUTH MILL AND BLACK CHURCH ROCK—THE
COAST TO HARTLAND—HARTLAND POINT—
HARTLAND ABBEY—HARTLAND QUAY

WILD scrambling is the portion of him who would explore the coastline between Clovelly and Hartland, and those who undertake the task, or the pleasure—and it is both—are few. The way lies by the church and Clovelly Court, adjoining : that church where Kingsley's father was rector, and whence the novelist of " Westward Ho ! " himself drew so much inspiration. Quaint epitaphs are found, notably :

" Think not that youth will keep you free,
For Death at twenty-seven months called off me."

To visit the cliff-top of Gallantry Bower, in Clovelly Park, a fee is demanded, as also to see Mouth Mill ; the receipts, in common with those paid for entrance to the Hobby Drive, being devoted, it is announced, " to local charities." Now Clovelly is a small place, and prosperous, the receipts large, and the demands for charity necessarily small : it seems to an unprejudiced observer that the statement needs to be amplified. More-

over, it is not altogether fair that visitors should be taxed by the owners of Clovelly Court, who receive an excellent rent-roll from Clovelly village, and should thus relieve themselves of a natural obligation to return in charity a percentage of the tribute they are paid.

But now for Mouth Mill. Disregarding all notices with such flapdoodle as "Private," and "Trespassers will be prosecuted," generally known



CLOVELLY, FROM THE SEA.

among lawyers as "wooden liars," you turn from Clovelly churchyard into a farmyard, then left and then right, along some park-like paths; soon finding yourself on a rough upland in company with a rude signpost pointing a wizened finger "To Hartland." On the right is a gate marked "Private," leading into a woodland drive. Taking no notice of that impudent attempt to warn the inoffensive stranger off a remarkably pretty coast scene, you descend through the woods by a

well-defined road, and come at last to Mouth Mill ; one of the typical gullies of this coast, with a stream losing itself on a beach composed of giant pebbles and strange, contorted rocks. A lonely cottage, the usual limekiln, and a landing-place, obviously where the Clovelly Court coals are landed, are the items completing the scene. A pyramidal rock of almost coal-black hue discloses



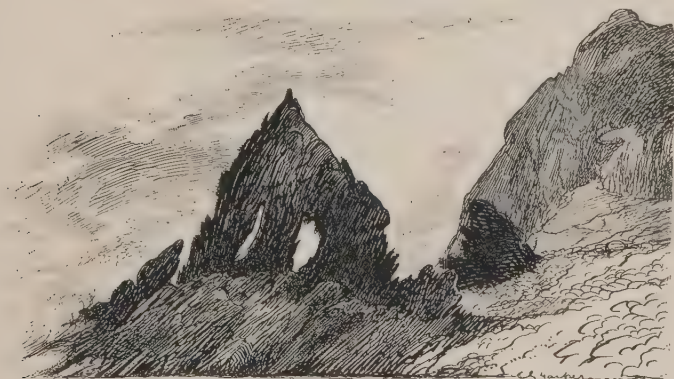
CLOVELLY CHURCH.

itself as you scramble down to the sea. This is Black Church Rock : a huge mass with a hole in the middle of it, and all its strata on end.

The unimpeded cliff-path scrambler can find a way from this beach up Windbury Head. Arrived there, in absolute solitude, down dives the path again, and up to the gigantic mass of Exmansionworthy Cliff. Here the going is extremely difficult, but the scenery is sufficient reward, even for these exertions. Fatacott Cliff, the loftiest of all these

ramparted outlooks, midway between Clovelly and Hartland, is the scene of many a shipwreck. Few winters pass without some unfortunate vessel ending here.

A long succession of cliffs leads at last to Eldern Point and thence into the wild inlet of Shipload Bay, whose shore, like most of these nooks, is paved with dark ribs of rock. Finally, West



BLACK CHURCH ROCK.

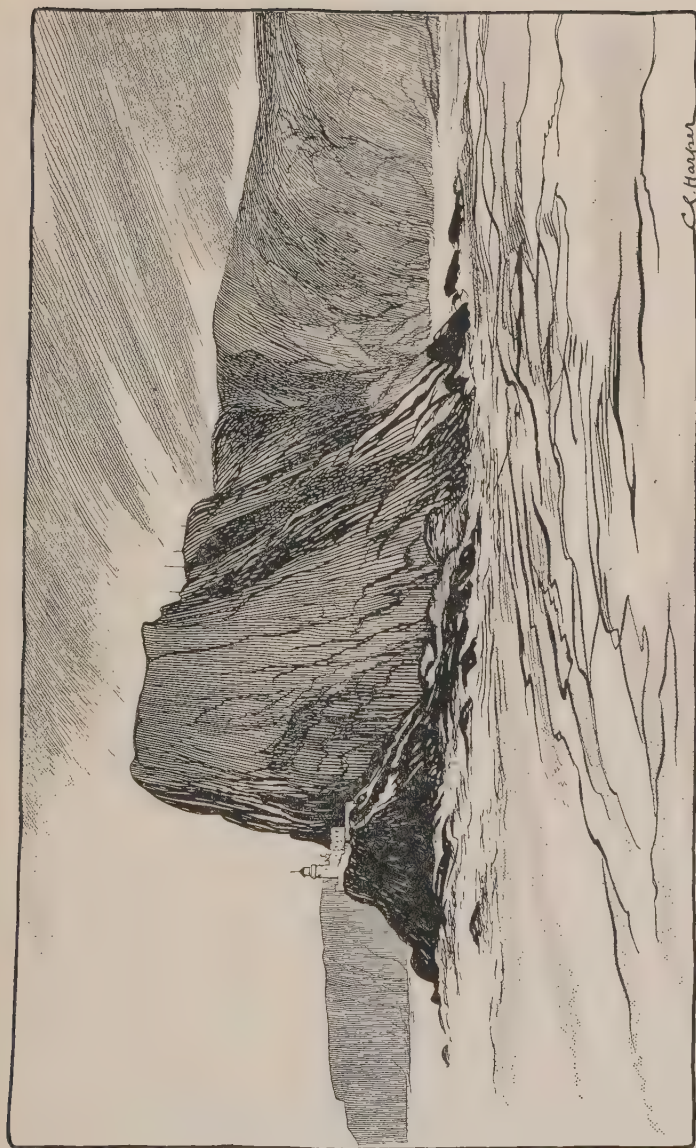
Titchberry Cliffs and Barley Bay, lead to Hartland Point itself; noblest in outline of all; with its coastguard station on the windy ridge, and the lighthouse, built so recently as 1874, on a rocky platform, two-thirds of the way down to the sea.

Here and onwards to Upright Cliff and Hartland Quay, the furious wash of the Atlantic is supremely noticeable, and has carved out the face of the land in fantastic manner. Pillared rocks, styled by some imaginative geographer the “Cow and

Calf," astonish by their bold aspect, and still more by their want of resemblance to Calf or Cow.

Follows then the hollow of Smoothlands, with Damehole Point ; on the very verge, as it would seem, of becoming an island, through the violence of the sea eating away the softer parts of the rock. Beyond this, the hollow of Black Mouth, well named from its inky rock ledges, opens, with an enchanting view inland, up a wooded valley, where a noble mansion may be seen in the distance.

That is "Hartland Abbey," the country residence so-called. Here, in the beautiful valley that, with its broad, level bottom, is more than a "combe," Gytha, wife of Earl Godwin and mother of the unfortunate King Harold, who lost life and kingdom at the Battle of Hastings, founded a college of secular canons, as a thank-offering to God and St. Nectan for the preservation of her husband from shipwreck. In the reign of Henry the Second, this establishment was re-founded by Geoffry de Dynham as a monastery under Augustine rule ; and through the centuries it prospered in this remote valley progressively enriched by the pious and the wicked alike : by the pious out of their piety, and by the wicked by way of compounding for their sins. And at last it ended in the usual confiscating way which makes the story of the monasteries in the time of Henry the Eighth seem to some so unmerited a tragedy, and to others a tardy, but well-earned retribution. From the Abbot who surrendered Hartland Abbey and its lands to Henry the Eighth, the property went by



HARTLAND POINT.

royal gift to one whose own name was, curiously enough, Abbott. From him it descended in turn to the Luttrells, the Orchards, and the Bucks, who in 1858 changed their name to Stucley. It was an Orchard who in 1779 built the existing mansion, that is seated so comfortably in the sheltered green strath, away from the winds rioting on those exposed uplands from which we have just now descended. He built in that allusive architectural style for which one may coin the word "ecclesiesque"; a midway halting between church architecture and domestic. Strange to say, he retained the Early English cloisters of the old Abbey, and here they are to this day.

It really is strange that he should—or that his architect, for him, should—have kept the cloisters, for the spirit of the age—it was the age of Horace Walpole, you know—was remarkably addicted to a kind of wry-necked appreciation of Gothic architecture, and given to destroy genuine antiquities, only to erect on the site of them imitative Gothic with eighteenth-century frills and embellishments. The "men of taste" who flourished towards the close of the eighteenth century were quite convinced that they could have taught the men who built in earlier ages something new in the way of Gothic: and they were, in a way, right. But what a way it was!

There were some queer characters in these districts of old, and none more striking than an ancient scion of the Stucley family—Thomas

Stucley, who was born in, or about, 1525 and died fighting the Moors, at the Battle of Alcazar, *ex parte* the King of Portugal, in 1578. There can be little doubt that, when he ended thus, Queen Elizabeth and her Ministers of State, like Dogberry, thanked God they were rid of a knave ; for Thomas Stucley was adventurer, pirate, renegade, and traitor to his country, and the cause of innumerable alarms and embarrassments. One of the five sons of Sir Hugh Stucley, of Affeton, near Ilfracombe, he formed something of a mystery : vague rumours that he was really an illegitimate son of Henry the Eighth following all his escapades. These were strengthened by the lenient treatment with which his most serious and inexcusable doings were visited by Queen Elizabeth. Always of an adventurous and reckless nature, and perhaps not a little tainted with madness, he proposed, when scarce more than a youth, to colonise Florida, and in 1563 set out with six ships and three hundred men, for the purpose. There must have been something unusual in the relations between himself and Queen Elizabeth, for him to have interviewed her, before he set out, in the terms ascribed to him. " He blushed not," we read, " to tell Elizabeth to her face that he preferred rather to be sovereign of a molehill than the highest subject to the greatest king in Christendom, and that he was assured he should be a prince before his death."

Humouring this extravagant language, Elizabeth replied, " I hope I shall hear from you when you are settled in your principality."

" I will write unto you," quoth Stucley.

" In what language ? " asked the Queen.

" In the style of princes," returned he ; " to our dear sister."

Fine language, this, to employ to one of those imperious Tudors, whose idea of the most effective repartee was the capital one of the headsman's axe !

Stucley, however, appears to have been allowed the most extraordinary licence. Instead of colonising Florida and entering the family circle of princes, he roved the seas for two years, occupying his formidable fleet in piracy. Not even in the age of Elizabeth, when the Armada incident was so fresh, could the nation afford to allow piratical attacks upon foreigners to be conducted on this scale. The English Ambassador to the Court of Madrid " hung his head for shame " when the doings of Stucley were brought to his notice, and that irresponsible person was disavowed. A squadron was even fitted out to arrest him, and did so at Cork in 1565 ; but he was merely, in effect, told not to do it again, and released. Afterwards he was employed by the Government in Ireland ; but, with the passion for intrigue and an absolute inability to act in a straightforward manner that possessed him, he became a Roman Catholic, and, resorting to Spain, endeavoured to bring about a Spanish invasion of Ireland. In anticipation of the success of this project, the King of Spain created him Duke of Ireland, but the plan failed. At length,

busy in all quarters in seeking trouble, he aided the Portuguese in Morocco, and was slain in the fighting there.

The exploits of this restless person were made much of in a book of his adventures published not long after his death, and in it he appears something of a hero ; but a detailed and intimate account of his career shows him to have been as mean and sordid a scoundrel in domestic affairs as he was bold and grasping in adventure.

A spot up the valley, whence a beautiful near view of Hartland Abbey is obtained, is known as Bow Bridge, and from it a road climbs steeply, bringing up at the village of Stoke, dwarfed by the great body and tall massive tower of its church, generally called Hartland church, although that town is situated out of sight, a mile further inland. The church is dedicated to Saint Nectan, who was a very popular saint in the West, as those travelling into Cornwall will find, to this day. A gigantic effigy of Nectan still remains on the eastern wall of the tower, and the high-church bias of the neighbourhood may be readily assumed from the restored churchyard cross, with its Calvary, its sculptured scenes from the life of Nectan and of Gytha, and its inscription, “ Nos salva rex cruce xte tua.”

This great church of St. Nectan has often been styled “ the Cathedral of North Devon.” Rebuilt in the fourteenth century, it is, of course, wholly in the Perpendicular style, and equally of course, presents a thoroughly well-balanced and

symmetrical mass, without any of those additions from time to time, or those changes of plan, that render churches built by degrees throughout the centuries so picturesque. St. Nectan's exhibits regularity and preciseness to the last degree. The tall tower, over a hundred and forty feet high, was doubtless built especially as a landmark for sailors.

The fine lofty nave is divided from the chancel by a magnificently carved fifteenth-century oaken rood-screen, which, if not actually finer than those of Pilton, Atherington, and Swimbridge, all in North Devon, is at any rate on the same level of craftsmanship. In the chancel remains a stone slab with epitaph of Thomas Docton :

“ Here lie I at the chancel door,
Here lie I, because I'm poor.
The further in, the more you pay ;
Here lie I, as warm as they.”

Word for word this is the same as the epitaph upon one “ Bone Phillip,” at Kingsbridge, South Devon.

Many curious details survive the restoration of 1850 and the fire of 1901 that destroyed the roof and narrowly missed wrecking the entire church. Among them is the “ Guard Chamber,” over the porch ; the “ Pope's Chamber,” as it is here styled. In the stone stairs to it is a hollow space, perhaps made for the purpose of holding holy water, wherewith to exorcise demons. The parish stocks, retired from active service in the cause of law and order, are kept in this room, which, with its fire-

place, is, or might easily be made, comfortable enough. Remains of the old wooden pulpit, inscribed "God Save Kinge James Fines," have puzzled many. The wood-carver probably meant "Finis"; but that does not help us much to understand his further meaning; and we must leave it at that.

The "Account Book of Church Expenses," from 1597 to 1706, still surviving, affords many an interesting glimpse into old days at Hartland; proving, among other things, how lonely was the situation and wild the life here. The church appears to have been fully armed against aggression, whether by sea or land; for we read how the churchwardens paid for "three bullett bagges for the churche musquettes"; and "Paid for lace to fasten the lyninge of the morians belonging to the churche corselettes, and for priming irons for the churche musquettes, *iid.*" Furthermore: "Paid for a hilt and handle and a scabert for a sworde, and for mendinge a dagger of the churche, *iis.*"

Roger Syncocke is down for one penny, "for mending a churche pike." Altogether, this seems a cheap lot for these bloody-minded Hartlanders; but a further entry of six pounds ten shillings, "for arms," seems to indicate that they were really dangerous people, best left alone. And that appears to have been the general healthy impression; for we do not read anywhere of battle, murder, and sudden death in these purlieus. "If you would have peace prepare for war," was

doubtless the axiom acted upon here ; and the truth of it was duly proven.

Hartland Quay, half a mile down the road, is an example of the overweening confidence of man in his ability to battle successfully with the forces of nature. You see, as you come down the road over the down, a tumultuous ocean, no longer the Bristol Channel, sometimes dun-coloured with the outpourings of the Severn, and not, except under



HARTLAND QUAY.

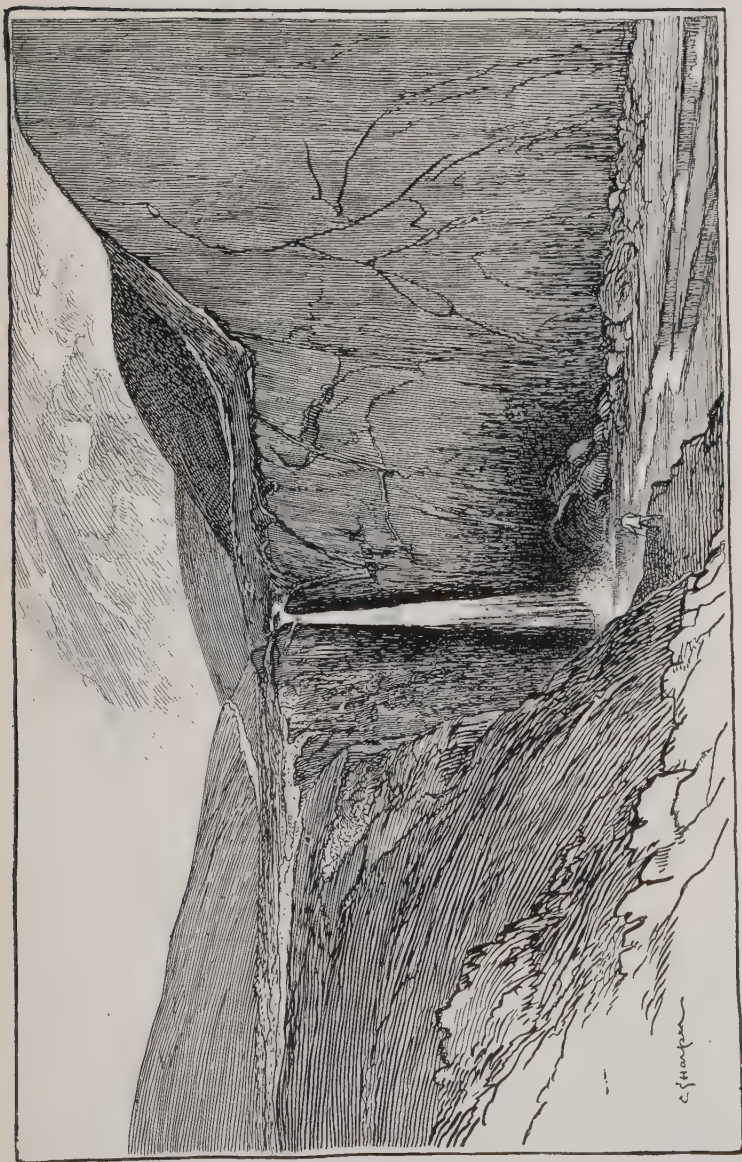
extreme provocation, to be stirred to great waves, but the Atlantic Ocean itself, dark blue with great crested waves rolling inshore, whether it be calm weather or boisterous. Only, in the last case, the always majestic sight becomes not a little terrifying here.

Where the down curves to the sea and the road dips steeply, in a hairpin corner, a rugged point, all bristling with black, jagged rocks, runs out, and in between them is a little flat space—the Quay. On one side is an isolated conical hill, capped with a flagstaff, and on the other a formidable reef, black as ink, with the rock-strata tipped perpendicularly in some convulsion that attended

the world's birth. Between these extremes lies the opening for the entrance of small craft, and a sorry haven it must be for any distressed mariner in severe weather. The place is lonely, save for the "Hartland Quay Hotel" and a few coast-guard cottages; and the stone pier built out to sea, by which it was proposed to make Hartland Quay in some small way a harbour, has been battered utterly out of existence by the waves. Watching the enormous walls of water, curving and advancing with an imperious unhesitating grandeur, you do not wonder that anything less solid than the living rock should go down before them.

The breaking rollers fill the scene with briny particles that hang in air like frost and taste salt on the lips, and the wind blows strong and invigorating from its journey of thousands of miles across the open sea.

An easy path leads from this point around Catherine Tor and its waterfall, into a wide moor-like valley where a little stream, fussing noisily in its peaty bed among occasional boulders, hurries along to join the sea. The scene where this rivulet, arriving abruptly at the cliff's edge, falls sheer over it, in a long spout of about a hundred feet, is the most dramatic thing on the coast of North Devon. Imagine the lonely valley, not in itself very remarkable, suddenly shorn off in a clean cut, disclosing a smooth face of rock as black as coal, ending in a little beach—and there you have Speke's Mouth, as it is called.



SPEKE'S MOUTH.

From here it is possible to follow the cliffs to Welcombe Mouth: a fatiguing journey. The quicker way, and also perhaps the more beautiful, is up the valley and into the road; coming down into the wooded vale of Welcombe Mouth by a zigzag route, amid a tangle of undergrowth. The village of Welcombe, which takes its name from a holy well dedicated to St. Nectan, is marked by its church-tower a mile inland; the valley itself being solitary, except for one very new and blatant farmstead. Here, as in all these other vales dipping to the sea, a little stream goes swirling down through the tangled brakes of the combe, to end ineffectively on the beach.

Welcombe Mouth is associated with the exploits of "Cruel Coppinger," supposed to have been a Danish sea-captain, wrecked off Hartland. Thrown ashore in dramatic fashion, and narrowly escaping death at the hands of the half-savage Welcombe people of over a century ago, who nursed odd prejudices against allowing wrecked sailors to survive, he settled awhile in the district, and himself became a wrecker and smuggler. He and his exploits are now part of local folk-lore, and the novelists have got hold of him too; but it would seem that, cast ashore with clothes all torn from him by the fury of the waves, he recovered consciousness only in time to prevent his being knocked on the head. Jumping up, seizing a cutlass, and vaulting, naked as he was, on to the back of a horse, he galloped up the combe to the sheltering house of some people named Hamlyn,

parents of the Dinah Hamlyn whom he subsequently married.

The exploits of Coppinger the Cruel, as they survive in legend, verge upon the incredible. How he beheaded a gauger with his own cutlass on the gunwale of a boat, how he thrashed the parson at the dinner-table, and how he was wafted away by a mysterious ship, from off the romantic-looking Gull Rock, that looms darkly off the coast ; are they not all enshrined in the folk-lore of the West, and particularly in the verses of which here is a sample ?

“ Would you know of Cruel Coppinger ?
He came from a foreign land ;
He was brought to us by the salt water
And carried away by the wind.”

And now, over the steep hill dividing Welcombe Mouth from Marsland Mouth, we come to the conclusion of the coast of North Devon. Marsland Mouth is a fit ending : the very culmination of loneliness. If the scenery of its seaward end is not so rugged as that of many of these “ mouths,” the extraordinary exuberance of the close-grown thorn, oak, and hazel thickets that have entirely overgrown the valley is unparalleled anywhere else in all these miles. Only a rugged footpath, closely beset with bushes, leads down to the shore. It must be admitted, however, that evidence of Marsland Mouth being within touch of modern life is not lacking — is only too evident, indeed—in two huge, outrageously ugly, plaster-faced houses,

of the very worst type of Ladbroke Grove "architecture," that look down from a ridge into the romantic cleft. The atrocity of their being placed here is beyond words.

I have styled Marsland Mouth "romantic," and not without due warrant; for does it not appear, early in the pages of "Westward Ho!" as the scene of Rose Salterne's adventure with the "white witch," Lucy Passmore?

White witch or black, her beliefs were sufficiently dark, and the mystic rites she practised were as uncanny as any of those in common usage by the more inimical kind of witches—the kind who "overlooked" you, played the very deuce and all with your sheep and cattle, and generally harboured a "familiar" in the shape of a black tom cat.

And really, as you read of her in Kingsley's pages, she was a person to be feared, on more than supernatural grounds, being as brawny and muscular as a man: a good deal more so than her husband. It must be no sinecure, to be the husband of a witch, and a muscular one at that.

A stranger, tracing his hazardous way that night down the tangled glen, to the sea, would have had any stray beliefs he may have harboured as to the existence of mermaids presently confirmed; for we read that Rose, wishing to see who would be her future husband, by direction of the witch, undressed on the midnight beach, in the cold light of the full moon, waded waist-deep, into the sea with her mirror, and performed the

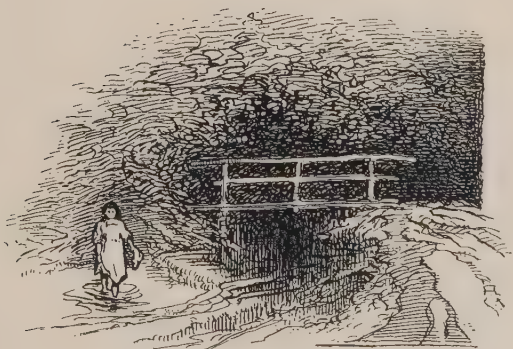
incantation. Except that Kingsley speaks of the "blaze" of the midnight moon, it is a magnificent scene. Ordinary observers are at one with the poets—and at odds with Kingsley—in thinking of moonlight as a cold flood, rather than as a "blaze."

A ring of flame, from the phosphorescence she stirred as she waded into the water, encircled her waist, and, as she looked down into the waves, every shell that crawled on the white sand was visible under the moonbeams, while the seaweeds waved like banners. Almost determined to turn and flee she, with an effort, dipped her head three times in the water, hurried out of the waves, and, looking through the strands of her wet hair into the mirror she carried, repeated the verse the white witch had taught her :

A maiden pure, lo ! here I stand,
Neither on sea, nor yet on land ;
Angels watch me on either hand.
If you be landsman, come down the strand ;
If you be sailor, come up the sand ;
If you be angel, come from the sky,
Look in my glass, and pass me by.
Look in my glass, and go from the shore ;
Leave me, but love me for evermore.

It was with a not unnatural superstitious fear, under these magical moonlit circumstances that, even as she was gazing into the mirror and repeating those lines, hurried footsteps were heard descending to the Mouth. They were not, however, angelic or demoniac apparitions nor even earthly lovers : merely fugitive Jesuits and traitors.

It is sad to find this scene overlooked by those hideous stuccoed houses on the ridge, but, at any-rate, as I straddle the little summer-time trickle of the stream in the bottom, dividing Devon and Cornwall, I cannot but admire the fine note of picturesqueness and high romance on which this coast-line ends.



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